

ACME

February No. 31

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M A G A Z I N E O F
HORROR

THE BIZARRE, THE FRIGHTENING, THE GRUESOME



**THE ROC
RAID**

by GEORGE B. TUTTLE

**THE
NOSELESS
HORROR**

by ROBERT E. HOWARD

Eerie Terror Stalks In
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M A G A Z I N E O F HORROR

THE BIZARRE, THE FRIGHTENING, THE GRUESOME

Volume 6

CONTENTS FOR FEBRUARY

Number 2

COVER	Virgil Finlay	
THE EDITOR'S PAGE		4
THE NOSELESS HORROR	Robert E. Howard	8
THE TAILED MAN OF CORNWALL ...	David H. Keller, M.D.	22
Sixth in the series of <i>Tales From Cornwall</i> .		
INQUISITIONS		35
THE DUEL OF THE SORCERERS (in two parts, part one)		
.....	Paul Ernst	38
FOR SERVICES RENDERED	Stephen Goldin	71
THE RECKONING (Your Findings on our July issue)		81
THE ROC RAID (novelet)	George B. Tuttle	82
IT IS WRITTEN (Your Comments and Our Replies)		115
COMING NEXT ISSUE		123
READERS' PREFERENCE COUPON (double-barrelled)		129/130

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Robert A. W. Lowndes, *Editor*

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The Editor's Page

As Harry Warner notes in his brief profile of me in *All Our Yesterdays* (see next issue for extended comment), the first professional fantasy publication I actually managed to obtain and read (this was in 1927) was not *AMAZING STORIES*, copies of which I had seen and, when possible, looked through as early as the July 1926 issue, which went on sale in June of that year, but McFadden's *GHOST STORIES* (May). Looking through the old issues today, the photographic illustrations and the over-all air of "true experiences" that was imposed upon the magazine are more than a trifle absurd; but to an imaginative lad of ten, they were very vivid indeed.

When, in 1930, I finally got to reading *AMAZING STORIES* and the other science titles regularly, ghost stories and other fiction dealing with the "supernatural" were childish things to be put aside. Science had proved that such things were all fraud, delusion, or outworn superstition and rather subversive of twentieth century living as it ought to be lived; I would frequently gaze at the covers of the latest issues of *WEIRD TALES* in 1930 and early 1931 and piously give thanks to something or other that I was not as other people who read such trash--heavens, no: I was awake, ahead of the crowd, *scientific*!

Of course, there were times when I wavered. An old coverless copy

of *WEIRD TALES* for August 1929 at an uncle's house revealed part two of Edmond Hamilton's four-part serial, *Outside the Universe*, and I longed to obtain the whole story--refraining from such self-punishment as reading this lone installment when the thought of obtaining the rest seemed to raise up utter impossibility. (These were the Depression days, when getting the necessary 25c for the current issue of the monthly science fiction titles, or 50c for the truly monster size *Quarterlies*, was difficult enough.) I did read *The Inn of Terror*, which was probably my introduction to the torture tale, with its implications of misdirected sexuality, and that momentarily put me off; it upset me and I didn't think I liked it--so that I didn't go on at that time to read Robert E. Howard's *The Shadow Kingdom*, which was in the same issue.

Nonetheless, ads for *WEIRD TALES*, often blurbng science fiction titles by Edmond Hamilton, appeared pretty regularly in *AMAZING STORIES*, and in June 1931 there was one announcing a new serial novel by Otis A. Kline, *Tam, Son of the Tiger*. I'd heard about Kline's science fiction tales which ran in *ARGOSY* but there was very little Kline material in the regular science fiction magazines. Then, on vacation in Newport, and having 25c, and having read all the current science fiction, I saw the latest issue. of

WEIRD TALES, just coming out of the packages. The cover illustrated part four of the Kline serial, and this was a very attractive-looking magazine—not a pulp with rough edges like **ASTOUNDING STORIES**, **ARGOSY**, etc., but neat and very well printed. I opened it to find stories by Edmond Hamilton (*The Shot from Saturn*) and Clark Ashton Smith (*The Resurrection of the Rattlesnake*), as well as Thomas Knight (*Old City of Jade*), all of them science fiction authors (and therefore respectable, you see). So I plunked down the quarter, took the magazine back to my aunt's house, where we were staying for several weeks, and had my introduction not only to **WEIRD TALES** but to two outstanding authors I had never read before: Robert E. Howard (*The Goats of Bal-Sagoth*) and H.P. Lovecraft (*The Stange High House in the Mist*).

It was fun, but somehow I felt guilty about it. These were supernatural stories, dealing with gods and magic, etc., all of which was entirely unscientific, superstitious, and unworthy of a science fictionist.

I didn't see the following issue of **WEIRD TALES** on the newsstands, but in November, there before my eyes was the neat, new December issue of **WEIRD TALES** with (gasp) another story by Robert E. Howard (*The Dark Man*), and Edmond Hamilton (*Creatures of the Comet*). I believe I resisted for all of two days. This, however, I told myself at least as sternly as Alice advised herself every now and then as she descended the rabbit hole, was enough. Why, pretty soon I might even start believing in ghosts again or something equally deplorable. I

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*The Winter (#14) issue is
now on sale or see page 125*

would not start reading the new serial (*The Haunted Chair*, by Gaston Leroux). I would not succumb to the next issue. I would avert my eyes and think of scientific things like rays and space ships and giant ants. I would put my hands behind my back. If necessary I would seek out another newsstand where *WEIRD TALES* was not displayed prominently—it was apparently carried in only one of the two magazine stories in Darien, and the other had all the current science fiction magazines anyway.

Then came December 1st, and we were in Stamford shopping, and (moan!) there was the January 1932 issue of *WEIRD TALES* with a cover that showed a strange, three-eyed being, with a girl's head in the other part of the cover and a starry background, all implying that this was an interplanetary story (*The Monster of the Prophecy* by Clark Ashton Smith). Being with my parents, I couldn't make a dash for it anyway, so gave thanks again for salvation and vowed to myself that I would not, no I would not let my feet carry me into that newsstand which had treacherously started to stock WT every issue. If I never saw the issue again, I couldn't buy it.

I could barely wait for temptation—first, of course, just to see if the new issue were on sale in Darien. Let us draw the curtain upon this tragic tale, and I shall add only that the next month brought part one of *The Devil's Bride*, and that I tried to kick the habit a couple of times in 1932, deliberately missing the August and September issues, then finally capitulated in full

when the October issue came out, featuring *The Wand of Doom* by Jack Williamson.

Meanwhile, and I just recalled, I'd succumbed to *STRANGE TALES* in 1931 without a struggle, and in fact had read the first issue (which I valiantly tried not to care much for) before yielding to WT; so perhaps the struggle over WT was a matter of containment.

And a few years later, when I met science fiction fans, I found that not a few had gone through similar difficulties—namely, that of feeling guilty about enjoying WT and ST, etc., when such trash was a blot upon the escutcheon of a forward-looking devotee of science.

By 1934, I'd worked up a rationalization. My first letter to be published in a science fiction magazine had appeared in the July 1932 issue of *WONDER STORIES*, with my name misspelled (a real crusher it was, too, Dr. Asimov!) But when *ASTOUNDING STORIES* was revived by Street & Smith in the fall of 1933, the early issues (October, November, and December) included outright weird tales along with science fiction—material which might well have been in *STRANGE TALES*, had that title been revived. And in the December 1933 issue (the last one to combine science and weird fiction blatantly) there was a letter from one Edward F. Gervais protesting this. Science fiction and weird fiction are in no wise related, Gervais averred, and should not appear in the same magazine.

It seemed at the time a very romantic thing to have letters I wrote published under a pseudonym, so
(Turn To Page 124)

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The Noseless Horror

by Robert E. Howard

(author of *Worms of the Earth*, *Kings of the Night*, etc.)

ROBERT ERVIN HOWARD (1906-1936) has come in to his own in recent years, after many years' obscurity following the death of *WEIRD TALES*, as L. Sprague de Camp, Lin Howard, and others have championed him through editing collections of his tales and completing unfinished stories in the Conan, Solomon Kane, and King Kull cycles—sometimes adapting complete mss, REH left behind him, sometimes working out fragments, etc. The present story does not belong in any series, and is not a sword-and-sorcery tale, although necromancy certainly does play a part in it.

ABYSES OF UNKNOWN TERROR lie veiled by the mists which separate man's everyday life from the uncharted and unguessed realms of the supernatural. The majority of people live and die in blissful ignorance of these realms—I say blissful, for the rending of the veil between the worlds of reality and of the occult is often a hideous experience. Once have I seen the veil so rent, and the incidents attendant thereto were burned so deeply into my brain that my dreams are haunted to this day.

The terrible affair was ushered in by an invitation to visit the estate of Sir Thomas Cameron, the noted Egyptologist and explorer. I accepted for the man was always an interesting study, though I disliked his brutal

manner and ruthless character. Owing to my association with various papers of a scientific nature, we had been frequently thrown together for several years, and I gathered that Sir Thomas considered me one of his few friends. I was accompanied on this visit by John Gordon, a wealthy sportsman to whom, also, an invitation had been extended.

The sun was setting as we came to the gate of the estate, and the desolate and gloomy landscape depressed me and filled me with nameless forebodings. Some miles away could be faintly seen the village at which we had detrained and between this, and on all sides, the barren moors lay stark and sullen. No other human habitation could be seen, and the only sign of life was some large fen bird flapping its lonely way inland. A cold wind whispered out of the east, laden with the bitter salt tang of the sea; and I shivered.

"Strike the bell," said Gordon, his impatience betraying the fact that the repellent atmosphere was affecting him, also. "We can't stand here all night."

But at that moment the gate swung open. Let it be understood that the manor house was surrounded by a high wall which entirely enclosed the estate. It was at the front gate that we stood. As it opened, we looked down a long driveway flanked by dense trees, but our attention at the present was riveted on the bizarre figure which stood to one side to let us pass. The gate had been opened by a tall man in Oriental dress. He stood like a statue, arms folded, head inclined in a manner respectful, but stately. The darkness of his skin enhanced the scintillant quality of his glittering eyes, and he would have been handsome save for a hideous disfiguration which at once robbed his features of comeliness and lent them a sinister aspect. He was noseless.

While Gordon and I stood silent, struck speechless by this apparition, the Oriental—a Sikh of India, by his turban—bowed and said in almost perfect English: "The master awaits you in his study, sahibs."

We dismissed the lad who had brought us from the village, and, as his cart wheels rattled away in the distance, we started up the shadowed driveway, followed by the Indian with our bags. The sun had set as we waited at the gate, and night fell with surprising suddenness, the sky being heavily veiled by gray misty clouds. The wind sighed drearily through the trees on each side of the driveway, and the great house loomed up in front of us, silent and dark except for a light in a single window. In the semi-darkness I heard the easy pad-pad of the Oriental's slippered feet behind us, and the impression was so like a great panther stealing upon his victim that a shudder shook me.

Then we had reached the door and were being ushered into a broad, dimly-lighted hallway, where Sir Thomas came striding forth to greet us.

"Good evening, my friends," his great voice boomed through the echoing house. "I have been expecting you! Have you dined? Yes? Then come into my study; I am preparing a treatise upon my latest discoveries and wish to have your advice on certain points. Ganra Singh!"

This last to the Sikh who stood motionless by. Sir Thomas spoke a few words to him in Hindustani, and, with another bow, the noseless one lifted our bags and left the hall.

"I've given you a couple of rooms in the right wing," said Sir Thomas, leading the way to the stairs. "My study is in this wing—right above this hall—and I often work there all night."

The study proved to be a spacious room, littered with scientific books and papers, and queer trophies from all lands. Sir Thomas seated himself in a vast armchair and motioned us to make ourselves comfortable. He was a tall, heavily-built man in early middle life, with an aggressive chin masked by a thick blond beard, and keen, hard eyes, that smoldered with pent energy.

"I want your help as I've said," he began abruptly. "But we won't go into that tonight; plenty of time tomorrow, and both of you must be rather fatigued."

"You live a long way from anywhere," answered Gordon. "What possessed you to buy and repair this old down-at-the heels estate, Cameron?"

"I like solitude," Sir Thomas answered. "Here I am not pestered with small-brained people who buzz about one like mosquitoes about a buffalo. I do not encourage visitors here, and I have absolutely no means of communicating with the outside world. When I am in England I am assured of quiet in which to pursue my work here. I have not even any servants; Ganra Singh does all the work necessary."

"That noseless Sikh? Who is he?"

"He is Ganra Singh. That's all I know about him. I met up with him in Egypt and have an idea that he fled India on account of some crime. But that doesn't matter; he's been faithful to me. He says that he served in the Anglo-Indian army and lost his nose from the sweep of an Afghan tulwar in a border raid."

"I don't like his looks," said Gordon bluntly. "You have a great deal of valuable trophies in this house; how can you be sure of trusting a man whom you know so little?"

"Enough of that," Sir Thomas waved the matter aside with an impatient gesture. "Ganra Singh is all right; I never make mistakes in read-

ing character. Let us talk of other things. I have not told you of my latest researches."

He talked and we listened. It was easy to read in his voice the determination and ruthless driving power which made him one of the world's foremost explorers and research men, as he told us of hardships endured and obstacles overcome. He had some sensational discoveries to disclose to the world, he said, and he added that the most important of his findings consisted of a most unusual mummy.

"I found it in a hitherto undiscovered temple far in the hinterlands of Upper Egypt, the exact location of which you shall learn tomorrow when we consult my notes together. I look to see it revolutionize history, for while I have not made a thorough examination of it, I have at least found that it is like no other mummy yet discovered. Differing from the usual process of mummification, there is no mutilation at all. The mummy is a complete body with all parts intact just as the subject was in life. Allowing for the fact that the features are dried and distorted with the incredible passage of time, one might imagine that he is looking upon a very ancient man who recently died, before disintegration has set in. The leathery lids are drawn down firmly over the eye sockets, and I am sure when I raise those lids I shall find the eyeballs intact beneath.

"I tell you, it is epoch making and overthrows all preconceived ideas! If life could by some manner be breathed into that withered mummy, it would be as able to speak, walk, and breathe as any man; for, as I said, its parts are as intact as if the man had died yesterday. You know the usual process—the disembowelling and so on—by which corpses are made mummies. But no such things have been done to this one. What would my colleagues not give to have been the finder! All Egyptologists will die from pure envy! Attempts have already been made to steal it—I tell you, many a research worker would cut my heart out for it!"

"I think you overvalue your find, and undervalue the moral senses of your co-workers," said Gordon bluntly.

Sir Thomas sneered. "A flock of vultures, sir," he exclaimed with a savage laugh. "Wolves! Jackals! Sneaking about seeking to steal the credit from a better man! The laity have no real conception of the rivalry that exists in the class of their betters. It's each man for himself—let everyone look to his own laurels, and to the devil with the weaker. Thus far I've more than held my own.

"Even allowing this to be true," retorted Gordon, "you have scant right to condemn your rivals' tactics in the light of your own actions."

Sir Thomas glared at his outspoken friend so furiously that I half expected him to commit bodily assault upon him; then the explorer's mood changed, and he laughed mockingly and uproariously.

"The affair of Gustave Von Honmann is still on your mind, doubtless. I find myself the object of scathing denunciations wherever I go since that unfortunate incident. It is, I assure you, a matter of complete indifference to me. I have never desired the mob's plaudits, and I ignore its accusations. Von Honmann was a fool and deserved his fate. As you know, we were both searching for the hidden city of Gomar, the finding of which added so much to the scientific world. I contrived to let a false map fall into his hands and sent him away on a wild goose chase into Central Africa."

"You literally sent him to his death," Gordon pointed out. "I admit that Von Honmann was something of a beast, but it was a rotten thing to do, Cameron. You knew that all the chances in the world were against him escaping death at the hands of the wild tribesmen into whose lands you sent him."

"You can't make me angry," answered Cameron imperturbably. "That's what I like about you, Gordon; you're not afraid to speak out your mind. But let's forget Von Honmann; he's gone the way of all fools. The one camp follower who escaped the general massacre and made his way back to civilization's outpost said that Von Honmann, when he saw the game was up, realized the fraud and died swearing to avenge himself on me, living or dead, but that has never worried me. A man is living and dangerous, or dead and harmless; that's all. But it's growing late and doubtless you are sleepy; I'll have Ganra Singh to show you to your rooms. As for myself, I shall doubtless spend the rest of the night arranging the notes of my trip for tomorrow's work."

Ganra Singh appeared at the door like a giant phantom, and we said good night to our host and followed the Oriental. Let me here say that the house was built in shape like a double ended L. There were two stories and between the two wings was a sort of court upon which the lower rooms opened. Gordon and I had been assigned two bedrooms on the first floor in the left wing, which let into this court. There was a door between them, and, as I was preparing to retire, Gordon entered.

"Strange sort of a chap, isn't he?" nodding across the court at the light which shone in the study window. "A good deal of a brute, but a great brain, marvelous brain."

I opened the door which let into the court for a breath of fresh air.

The atmosphere in these rooms was crisp and sharp, but musky as if from unuse.

"He certainly doesn't have many visitors." The only lights visible besides those in our two rooms, was that in the upstairs study across the court.

"No." Silence fell for a space; then Gordon spoke abruptly, "Did you hear how Von Honmann died?"

"No."

"He fell into the hands of a strange and terrible tribe who claim descent from the early Egyptians. They are past masters at the hellish art of torture. The camp follower who escaped said that Von Honmann was killed slowly and fiendishly, in a manner which left him un mutilated, but shrunk and withered him until he was unrecognizable. Then he was sealed into a chest and placed in a fetish hut for a horrible relic and trophy."

My shoulders twitched involuntarily. "Frightful!"

Gordon rose, tossed away his cigarette, and turned toward his room.

"Getting late, good night—*what was that?*"

Across the court had come a faint crash as if a chair or table had been upset. As we stood, frozen by a sudden vague premonition of horror, a scream shuddered out across the night.

"Help! Help! Gordon! Slade! Oh God!"

Together we rushed out into the court. The voice was Sir Thomas', and came from his study in the left wing. As we raced across the court, the sounds of a terrible struggle came clearly to us, and again Sir Thomas cried out like a man in his death agony: "He's got me! Oh God, he's got me!"

"Who is it, Cameron?" shouted Gordon desperately.

"Ganra Singh—" suddenly the straining voice broke short, and a wild gibbering came dimly to us as we rushed into the first door of the lower left wing and charged up the stairs. It seemed an Eternity before we stood at the door of the study, beyond which still came a bestial yammering. We flung open the door and halted, aghast.

Sir Thomas Cameron lay writhing in a growing pool of gore, but it was not the dagger sunk deep into his breast which held us in our tracks like men struck dead, but the hideous and evident insanity stamped on his face. His eyes flared redly, fixed on nothing, and they were the eyes of a man who is staring into Purgatory. A ceaseless gibbering burst from his lips, and then into his yammering was woven human words: "— Nose-

less—the noseless one—"Then a rush of blood burst from his lips, and he dropped on his face.

We bent over him and eyes each other in horror.

"Stone dead," muttered Gordon. "But what killed him?"

"Ganra Singh—" I began; then both of us whirled. Ganra Singh stood silently in the doorway, his expressionless features giving no hint of his thoughts. Gordon rose, his hand sliding easily to his hip pocket.

"Ganra Singh, where have you been?"

"I was in the lower corridor, locking the house for the night. I heard my master call me, and I came."

"Sir Thomas is dead. Do you have any idea as to who did the murder?"

"No, sahib. I am new to this English land; I do not know if my master had any enemies."

"Help me lift him on this couch." This was done. "Ganra Singh, you realize that we must hold you responsible for the time being."

"While you hold me, the real killer may escape."

Gordon did not reply to this. "Let me have the keys to the house."

The Sikh obeyed without a word.

Gordon then led him across the outer corridor to a small room in which he locked him, first assuring himself that the window, as all the other windows in the house, was heavily barred. Ganra Singh made no resistance; his face showed nothing of his emotions. As we shut the door we saw him standing impassively in the center of the room, arms folded, eyes following us inscrutably.

We returned to the study with its shattered chairs and tables, its red stain on the floor, and the silent form on the couch.

"There's nothing we can do until morning," said Gordon. "We can't communicate with anyone, and if we started out to walk to the village we should probably lose our way in the darkness and fog. It seems a pretty fair case against the Sikh."

"Sir Thomas practically accused him in his last words."

"As to that, I don't know. Cameron shouted his name when I yelled, but he might have been calling the fellow—I doubt if Sir Thomas heard me. Of course, that remark about the "noseless one" could seem to mean no one else, but it isn't conclusive. Sir Thomas was insane when he died."

I shuddered. "That, Gordon, is the most terrible phase of the matter. What was it that blasted Cameron's reason and made of him a screaming maniac in the last few minutes he had to live?"

Gordon shook his head. "I can't understand it. The mere fact of looking death in the eyes never shook Sir Thomas' nerve before. I tell you, Slade, I believe there's something deeper here than meets the eye. This smacks of the supernatural, in spite of the fact that I was never a superstitious man. But let's look at it in a logical light.

"This study comprises the whole of the upper left wing, being separated from the back rooms by a corridor which runs the whole length of the house. The only door of the study opens into that corridor. We crossed the court, entered a lower room of the left wing, went into the hall into which we were first admitted, and came up the stairs into the upper corridor. The study door was shut, but not locked. And through that door came whatever it was that shattered Sir Thomas Cameron's brain before it murdered him. And the man—or thing—left the same way, for it is evident that nothing is concealed in the study, and the bars on the windows prohibit escape in that manner. Had we been a few moments quicker we might have seen the slayer leaving. The victim was still grappling with the fiend when I shouted, but between that instant and the moment we came into the upper corridor, there was time for the slayer, moving swiftly, to accomplish his design and leave the room. Doubtless he concealed himself in one of the rooms across the hall and either slipped out while we were bending over Sir Thomas and made his escape—or, if it were Ganra Singh, came boldly into the study."

"Ganra Singh came after us, according to his story. He should have seen anyone trying to escape from the rooms."

"The killer might have heard him coming and waited until he was in the study before emerging. Oh, understand, I believe the Sikh is the murderer, but we wish to be fair and look at the matter from every angle. Let's see that dagger."

It was a thin-bladed, wicked-looking Egyptian weapon, which I remembered having seen lying on Sir Thomas' table.

"It seems as if Ganra Singh's clothes would have been in disarray and his hands bloody," I suggested. "He scarcely had time to cleanse himself and arrange his garments."

"At any rate," Gordon answered, "the fingerprints of the killer should be upon this dagger hilt. I have been careful not to obliterate any such traces, and I will lay the weapon on the couch here for the examination of a Bertillon expert. I am not adept in such matters myself. And in the meanwhile I think I'll go over the room, after the accepted manner of detectives, to look for any possible clues."

"And I'll take a turn through the house. Ganra Singh may really be innocent, and the murderer lurking somewhere in the building."

"Better be careful. If there is such a being, remember that it is a desperate man, quite ready and willing to do murder."

I took up a heavy blackthorn and went out into the corridor. I forgot to say that all these corridors were dimly lighted, and the curtains drawn so closely that the whole house appeared to be dark from the outside. As I shut the door behind me, I felt more strongly than ever the oppressive silence of the house. Heavy velvet hangings masked unseen doorways and, as a stray whisper of wind whipped them about, I started, and the line from Poe flitted through my brain:

"And the silken, sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me, filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before."

I strode to the landing of the stair, and, after another glance at the silent corridors and the blank doors, I descended. I had decided that if any man had hidden in the upper story, he would have descended to the lower floor by this time, if indeed, he had not already left the house. I struck a light in the lower reception hall, and went into the next room. The whole of the main building between the wings, I found, was composed of Sir Thomas' private museum, a really gigantic room, filled with idols, mummy cases, stone and clay pillars, papyrus scrolls, and like objects. I wasted little time here, however, for as I entered my eyes fell upon something I knew to be out of place in some manner. It was a mummy case, very different from the other cases, and it was open! I knew instinctively that it had contained the mummy of which Sir Thomas had boasted that evening, but now it was empty. The mummy was gone.

Thinking of his words regarding the jealousy of his rivals, I turned hastily and made for the hall and the stair. As I did so, I thought I heard somewhere in the house a faint crashing. I had no desire, however, to further explore the building alone and armed only with a club. I wished to return and tell Gordon that we were probably opposed to a gang of international thieves. I had started back toward the hall when I perceived a stair case leading directly from the museum room, and it I mounted, coming into the upper corridor near the right wing.

Again the long dim corridor ran away in front of me, with its blank mysterious doors and dark hangings. I must traverse the greater part of

it in order to reach the study at the other end, and a foolish shiver shook me as I visualized hideous creatures lurking behind those closed doors. Then I shook myself. Whatever had driven Sir Thomas Cameron insane, it was human, and I gripped my blackthorn more firmly and strode down the corridor.

Then after a few strides I halted suddenly, the short hairs prickling at the back of my neck, and my flesh crawling unaccountably. I sensed an unseen presence, and my eyes turned as drawn by a magnet to some heavy tapestries which masked a doorway. There was no wind in the rooms, but *the hangings moved slightly!* I started, straining my eyes on the heavy dark fabric until it seemed the intensity of my gaze would burn through it, and I was aware, instinctively, that other eyes glared back. Then my eyes strayed to the wall beside the hidden doorway. Some freak of the vague light threw a dark formless shadow there, and, as I looked, it slowly assumed shape—a hideous distorted goblin image, grotesquely man-like, *and noseless!*

My nerve broke suddenly. That distorted figure might be merely the twisted shadow of a man who stood behind the hangings, but it was burned into my brain that, man, beast, or demon, those dark tapestries hid a shape of terrible and soul-shattering threat. A brooding horror lurked in the shadows and there in that silent darkened corridor with its vague flickering lights and that stark shadow hovering within my gaze, I came as near to insanity as I have ever come—it was not so much what met my eyes and senses, but the phantoms conjured up in my brain, the terrible dim images that rose at the back of my skull and gibbered at me. For I knew that for the moment the commonplace human world was far away, and that I was face to face with some horror from another sphere.

I turned and hurried down the corridor, my futile blackthorn shaking in my grasp, and the cold sweat forming in great beads upon my brow. I reached the study and entered, closing the door behind me. My eyes turned instinctively to the couch with its grim burden. Gordon leaned over some papers on a table, and he turned as I entered, his eyes alight with some suppressed excitement.

"Slade, I've found a map here drawn by Cameron, and, according to it, he found that mummy on the borders of the land where Von Honmann was murdered—"

"The mummy's gone," I said.

"Gone? By Jupiter! Maybe that explains it! A gang of scientific thieves! Likely Ganra Singh is in with them—let's go talk to him."

Gordon strode across the corridor, I following. My nerve was still shaken, and I had no use to discuss my recent experience. I must get back some of my courage before I could bring myself to put the fear I had felt into words. Gordon knocked at the door. Silence reigned. He turned the key in the lock, swung the door open, and swore. The room was empty! A door opening into another room parallel to the corridor showed how he had escaped. The lock had been fairly torn off.

"That was that noise I heard!" Gordon exclaimed. "Fool that I was, I was so engrossed in Sir Thomas' notes, that I paid no attention, thinking it was but the noise of your opening or closing a door! I'm a failure as a detective. If I had been on my guard I might have arrived on the scene before the prisoner made his getaway."

"Lucky for you, you didn't," I answered shakily. "Gordon, let's get out of here! Ganra Singh was lurking behind the hangings as I came up the corridor—I saw the shadow of his noseless face—and I tell you, the man's not human. He's an evil spirit! An inhuman goblin! Do you think a man could unhinge Sir Thomas' reason—a human being? no, no, no! He's a demon in human form—and I'm not so sure that the form's human!"

Gordon's face was shadowed. "Nonsense! A hideous and unexplained crime has been perpetrated here tonight, but I will not believe that it cannot be explained in natural terms—listen!"

Somewhere down the corridor a door had opened and closed. Gordon leaped to the door, sprang through the passageway. Down the corridor. I followed, cursing his recklessness, but fired by his example to a kind of foolhardy bravery. I had no doubt but that the end of that wild chase would be a death grapple with the inhuman Indian, and the shattered door lock was ample proof of his prowess, even without the gory form which lay in the silent study. But when a man like Gordon leads, what can one do but follow?

Down the corridor we sped, through the door where we had seen the thing vanish, through the dark room beyond, and into the next. The sounds of flight in front of us told us that we were pressing close upon our prey. The memory of that chase through darkened rooms is a vague and hazy dream—a wild and chaotic nightmare. I do not remember the rooms and passages which we traversed. I only know that I followed Gordon blindly and halted only when he stopped in front of a tap-

estry-hung doorway beyond which a red glow was apparent. I was amazed, breathless. My sense of direction was completely gone. I had no idea as to what part of the house we were in, or why that crimson glow pulsed beyond the hangings.

"This is Ganra Singh's room," said Gordon. "Sir Thomas mentioned it in his conversation. It is the extreme upper room of the right wing. Further he cannot go, for this is the only door to the room and the windows are barred. Within that room stands at bay the man—or whatever—killed Sir Thomas Cameron!"

"Then in God's name let us rush in upon him before we have time to reconsider and our nerve breaks!" I urged, and, shouldering past Gordon, I hurled the curtains aside . . .

The red glow at least was explained. A great fire leaped and flickered in the huge fireplace, lending a red radiance to the room. And there at bay stood a nightmarish and hellish form—the *missing mummy*!

My dazed eyes took in at once glance the wrinkled leathery skin, the sunken cheeks, the flaring and withered nostrils from which the nose had decayed away; the hideous eyes were open now, and they burned with a ghastly and demoniac life. A single glimpse was all I had, for in an instant the long lean thing came lurching headlong at me, a heavy ornament of some sort clutched in its lank and taloned hand. I struck once with the blackthorn and felt the skull give way, but it never halted—for who can slay the dead?—and the next instant I was down, writhing and dazed, with a shattered shoulder bone, lying where the sweep of that dried arm had dropped me.

I saw Gordon at short range fire four shots pointblank into the frightful form, and then it had grappled with him, and as I struggled futilely to regain my feet and re-enter the battle, my athletic friend, held helpless in those inhuman arms, was bent back across a table until it seemed his spine would give way.

It was Ganra Singh who saved us. The great Sikh came suddenly through the hangings like an Arctic blast and plunged into the fray like a wounded bull elephant. With a strength I have never seen equalled and which even the living-dead man could not resist, he tore the animated mummy from its prey and hurled it across the room. Borne on the crest of that irresistible onslaught, the mummy was flung backward until the great fireplace was at its back. Then with one last volcanic effort, the avenger crashed it headlong into the fire, beat it down, stamped it into the flames until they caught at the writhing limbs, and

the frightful form crumbled and disintegrated among them with an intolerable scent of decayed and burning flesh.

Then Gordon, who had stood watching like a man in a dream, Gordon the iron-nerved lion hunter who had braved a thousand perils, now crumpled forward on his face in a dead faint!

Later we talked the affair over, while Ganra Singh bandaged my hurts with hands as gentle and light of touch as those of a woman.

"I think," I said weakly, "and I will admit that my view is untenable in the light of reason, but then any explanation must be incredible and improbable, that the people who made this mummy centuries and possibly thousands of years ago knew the art of preserving life; that by some means this man was simply put to sleep and slept in a death-like manner all these years, just as Hindu fakirs appear to lie in death for days and weeks at a time. When the proper time came, then the creature awoke and started on its—or his—hideous course."

"What do you think, Ganra Singh?"

"Sahib," said the great Sikh courteously, "who am I to speak of hidden things? Many things are unknown to man. After the sahib had locked me into the room, I bethought me that whoever slew my master might escape while I stood helpless, and, desiring to go elsewhere, I plucked away the lock with as much silence as I could and went forth searching among the darkened rooms. At last I heard sounds in my own bedroom and, going there, found the sahibs fighting with the living-dead man. It was fortunate that before all this occurred I had built a great fire in my room so as to last all night, for I am unused to this cold country. I know that fire is the enemy of all evil things, the Great Cleanser, and so thrust the Evil One into the flame. I am glad to have avenged my master and aided the sahibs."

"Aided!" Gordon grinned. "If you hadn't showed up just when you did, our bally ships would have been sunk. Ganra Singh, I've already apologized for my suspicions; you're a real man."

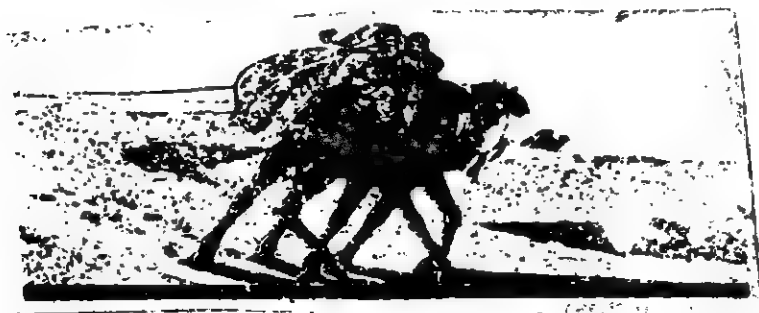
"No, Slade," his face grew serious, "I think you are wrong. In the first place, the mummy isn't thousands of years old. It's scarcely ten years old! As I find by reading his secret notes, Sir Thomas didn't find it in a lost temple in Upper Egypt, he found it in a fetish hut in Central Africa. He couldn't explain its presence there, and so said he found it in the hinterlands of Egypt. He being an Egyptologist, it sounded better, too. But he really thought it was very ancient, and, as we know, he was right about the unusual process of mummification. The tribesmen who sealed that mummy into its case knew more about such things

than the ancient Egyptians, evidently. But it wouldn't have lasted over twenty years anyway, I'm sure. Then Sir Thomas came along and stole it from the tribesmen—the same tribe, by the way, who murdered Von Honmann.

"No, your theory is wrong, I feel. You have heard of the occult theory which states that a spirit, earthbound through hate or love, can only do material good or evil when animating a material body? The occultists say, reasonably enough, that to bridge the gulf which lies between the two worlds of life and death, the spirit or ghost must inhabit and animate a fleshly form—preferably its own former habitation. This mummy had died as men die, but I believe that the hate it felt in life was sufficient to span the void of death, to cause the dead and withered body to move and act and do murder.

"Now, if this be true, there is no limit to the horror to which mankind may be heir. If this be true, men may be hovering forever on the brinks of unthought oceans of supernatural terror, parted from the next world by a thin veil which may be rent, as we have just seen it rent. I would like to believe otherwise—but Slade—

"As Ganra hurled the struggling mummy into the fire, I watched—the sunken features expanded in the heat for a fleeting instant, just as a toy balloon when inflated, and for one brief second took on a human and familiar likeness. *Slade, that face was the face of Gustave Von Honmann!*"



Tales From Cornwall

by David H. Keller, M.D

(author of *The Abyss, Heredity, etc.*) ,

No.6 The Tailed Man Of Cornwall

The selection of *Tales From Cornwall* by DAVID H. KELLER, M.D. (1880 - 1966) which ran in *WEIRD TALES* all dealt with the humorous and whimsical Cecil, self-appointed Overlord of the area; there were four of them, and they were published in the proper order, the last of this part of the series appearing in the October 1930 issue. Now we see that instead of being the first four stories of the entire series, they are actually the fifth to eighth stories, and that the earlier ones were somewhat different in tone. It is one of the ironies of history that if, at one time, the Irish believed that the men of Cornwall all had tails, at a later date the marauding English and Scotch, under Cromwell, would send back reports that the Irish had tails.

ARGUMENT FROM DATES

- 200 B. C. Folkes-King Eric rules in Wearfold, Norway. Olaf is Lord of the House of Wolves in Jutland.
- 190 B. C. Balder, son of Olaf, is born.
- 189 B. C. Thyra, daughter of Eric, is born.
- 171 B. C. Balder adventures to Wearfold, kills a giant and marries Thyra.
- 140 B. C. Odin, only son of Holga, is born.
- 100 B. C. The Wolves are driven from Jutland by the Norsemen. Balder is transmuted into an oak tree. Under the command of Lord Holga the Wolves sail southwest and find a new home in Armorica.
- 99 B. C. Harold, son of Odin, is born.
- 77 B. C. Edward, son of Harold, is born.
- 56 B. C. Edward adventures to the east and marries an eagle. She lays an egg, hatches a boy, changes to a woman and calls her son Cecil.
- 57 B. C. Caesar invades Gaul. The Wolves flee to Cornwall. Lord Harold dies and his son Edward becomes Lord. The family name is changed to Hubelaire.
- 43 A. D. Claudius conquers most of England and builds the Hadrian Wall.
- 350 A. D. The Romans are driven from England.
- 400 A. D. The Hubelaires are never conquered, but repeated sieges of their castle, destruction of their lands, and frequent pestilences so weaken them that they leave Cornwall and sail to the Isle of Lundy in the Hungry Sea. Here they build a walled town and live at peace for thirty years.
- 430 A. D. The Rathlings invade Lundy and attack the Hubelaires. After long fighting with heavy losses on both sides, peace is declared; but the Rathlings remain in Lundy.
- 440 A. D. The Rathlings break the peace and kill all the Hubelaires; but Raymond the Golden, before his death, becomes the father of two sons, Raymond and Doom.
- 462 A. D. Raymond and Doom destroy the Rathlings and then sail to Armorica, where they establish the little kingdom of Walling.
- 782 A. D. Cecil is Lord of the Hubelaires in Walling. His only daughter, Angelica, dies after destroying a giant.
- 783 A. D. Cecil, nephew of Lord Cecil, adventures to Cornwall and becomes the Overlord of that country. He lives in the castle of the Hubelaires, first occupied by his family in 57 B. C.

FOR SEVERAL DAYS I WAS more than busy receiving the great men of Cornwall, who, driven by some mysterious urge which no one fully comprehended but myself, had thronged to the castle to acknowledge me as their Overlord. The statements they made to me concerning my fitness for this position were most flattering, yet, at the same

time, as I heard their petitions to have this or that giant killed and one or another of the land's enemies driven out or destroyed, I felt there was certainly a large amount of work connected with my new position of authority. Still, I told all of them that just as soon as I could I would attend to all these minor adventures, because if I was to be Overlord of Cornwall I wanted that land to be peaceful, quiet, and safe. They were delighted with my promises and departed thoroughly convinced of my power to do all they had asked of me. Of course, there was no doubt in my mind as to my ability to perform any great act of chivalry that fell to my lot, for I was certain of my cleverness in fighting against any evil man or animal, even without help; but at the same time it was pleasing to know that in any conflict I would have the assistance of the little man I had rescued from the glass bottle on the occasion of the Battle of the Toads.

Finally it seemed all my nobles had departed from the castle, which gave me great pleasure, for so far I had used my library only as a consultation room and had found no time to do more than glance at the shelves of bound manuscripts. To my great interest I found on a low table on one side of the room a most peculiar ebony box on the top of which was inlaid the letter H. I carried this over to the central table and opened it. Inside was a book of blank vellum pages elegantly bound in leather, along with a large pot of black ink and a number of goose quill pens. These gave me an inspiration. For some years I had longed to write a history of my life, feeling certain that if I lived long enough I would have many interesting tales to place in proper order and thus give future Hubelaires an accurate account of the adventures of one of their great men. Now I had vellum, ink and quills and, since there seemed nothing imperative to stop me, I decided to start my narrative. But first I placed in the back of this book the chart given to me by my uncle showing the location of our family treasures, not wishing it to be lost and yet not wishing to have the search interfere with my writing.

Unwilling to be disturbed, I sent a page for my seneschal, Aethelstan. He was an old man but very capable and had cared for my guests in a most efficient manner.

"How go the affairs of the castle this morning?" I asked. "I have had no visitors, so I judge the nobles have all departed. This pleases me, for I long to be at peace and divert myself with literary work that, for some time, has demanded attention."

"There still remains one of your guests, my Lord," he replied. "He is Lord FitzHugh, last of a very ancient and honorable Cornwall family.

Usually he has a pleasing personality, but since coming here with the other nobles he has been in a dour humor. During all the days he has eaten your meat he has never smiled. The gossips say he had ambitions — wanted to become the Overlord — and, of course, since your coming to Cornwall that has been impossible."

"Strange," I mused. "He has not asked to see me."

"That may be for the best. He may be looking to slip a dagger into you."

"I hope not. Such a stroke would deprive me of much future pleasure and prevent me from doing all I wish for the welfare of my country." At the same time I stroked the Golden Key and determined to keep it always on me. My friend had promised that I would become Overlord, but had not said for how long.

"Send the Lord to me," I commanded. "It would be best to talk matters over with him. Suggest to him that it would be best to come without a dagger, for I have magical powers he wots not of."

FitzHugh came to the library, and there was no doubt that he was far from happy. But I found that I had completely misjudged the poor fellow. He was not worrying about his loss of power, but about the loss of something far more precious to him, his fair lady love.

He was evidently fond of the finer things in life and, in the peace of my library, in front of the fire, he lost no time at all in unburdening himself and telling me of his great sorrow.

"I am a man of Cornwall," he began. "My family have always lived in Cornwall. Perhaps I would have been wiser had I never left it; but, like many young knights, I had to go adventuring. Fate took me to Ireland, and Boy Cupid introduced me to Queen Broda. When we met, doves flew over us and a sparrow lighted on her golden chariot. It was love at first sight, but the sad hap was that she did not know I was from Cornwall. She rules mightily over a large part of Ireland, and there her word is law, but she loved me and the fact I was poor made little difference in the sweetness of her kisses. We were ready to marry, but when she found that I was a Cornwall man, she simply told me that she would never marry me, even if I was the last man on earth."

"That was a very positive statement," I suggested.

"It was, and there is no doubt she meant it. Then I came home, and since then it has made little difference to me whether I was ever to be Overlord or even whether I was alive or dead. For, to be happy, I must have Broda for wife, and for her to be happy she must have me

for her lover, and yet she says it can never be simply because I am a man of Cornwall."

"'Tis a sad tale," I agreed, "and I suppose you want my help?"

"That is why I lingered."

"Did she give any reason for her cruel refusal of your love?"

"That in very truth she did. She said that all Cornwall men have tales of braggadocio and other tails, the very thought of which filled her with fear."

"Do you mean that she believed you to be a tailed man?"

"Yes. That is what she said."

"Of course she must have some reason for such an idea."

"She certainly must."

"Naturally, if she really thought so, we cannot blame her for not wishing to marry you. Under the circumstances the lady showed rare judgement and a very fine discrimination. But why did you not show her she was wrong?"

"I tried to in every way I could but in the argument she said twenty words to my one, which is a way women have of winning an argument. I told her that I was as tailless as any of her Irishmen, but she simply cried and said she could not trust me and how would she feel after we were married and she could not undo it, to find that I had lied to her. I told her that I was a true man and spoke the truth, and she retorted that thus had all men spoken to women since the days of Knight Aeneas and Lady Dido and none were to be trusted, especially one with a tail."

"Oh, these women! These women!" I sadly remarked, shaking my head.

"Have you ever been in love?" he asked dolefully.

"No. I have had so many more important adventures to accomplish that there has been neither time nor inclination to fiddle-faddle and waste my time over such a frail, inconsequential part of life as women."

"Then you don't know anything about them. Ever try to argue with a mad woman?"

"Positively no. When I was in Araby a very wise man gave me this sage bit of philosophy: 'He who argues with a woman is a fool and he who tries to argue with an angry woman is a damned fool.' So I leave them alone except when they become too dangerous, and then I simply kill them."

"I thought you could help me," he sighed, "but I would not want you to kill her. Then I would have to kill myself, and our spirits would

wander by the water of Lethe, seeing each other every day, yet unable to realize that we ever knew each other."

"Cheer up," I said; "I may be able to help you. I think I will send for this haughty queen and explain a few things to her. Can I tell her positively that you have no tail?"

"That is something you will have to decide for yourself," was all the satisfaction FitzHugh would give me.

"I think you ought to be candid with me," I cautioned him, shrugging my shoulders. "I am Overlord of a country which I hope some day will be a great realm. One of the foundations of my land will be honesty and fair dealings with our neighbors. Thus we may hope to escape devastating wars. Suppose, on my word of honor as a true Overlord, I tell this lady that you have no tail, and on the strength of my say-so she marries you and then she finds that I told her wrong? Think how she would feel! She probably would cut off both your head and your tail and come to Cornwall to revenge herself on me. So it is very important that I know certainly about this problem."

"You will simply have to make up your mind, form your own opinion." He was so stubborn that I was on the point of telling him to be gone but, on learning that he lived only a few hours' ride from my castle, I suggested that I ride with him and spend a few days in his company. This seemed to cheer him, and he at once urged me to do so. He told me his mother was a fine old dame and had lovely roses and a complete herb garden where she raised simples for the healing of their folk.

In fact, I was greatly pleased with Dame FitzHugh, She was a very pleasant lady, quite witty and at the same time remarkably learned. Though greatly distressed over the unhappiness of her son, she spared no effort to make my short visit a pleasant one, and we had several very interesting and profitable conversations in the privacy of her rose garden. Then I left them, promising that I would do what I could as soon as I could and assuring them that I was certain everything would turn out in a most happy manner to the great satisfaction of FitzHugh.

It was a fortunate happening that I returned to the Hubelaire castle when I did. While the nobles of Cornwall were perfectly willing for me to be their Overlord, the men of Wales had some different ideas. In fact, they had a candidate of their own. Ambassadors were waiting for me who said that unless I left the country at once they would secure the help of Queen Broda, who hated Cornwall more than she hated Hell, and they

would come over my land and replace all the dead Cornwall men with first-class Welshmen.

I consulted with several of my mightiest knights. It was their opinion that if the Welshmen came by themselves it would be an even fight, but if the Irish became their allies it would be hard to overcome them. They were certain that all of Cornwall would be loyal to me, but there was no doubt they were afraid of this Irish queen. Of course the little man I had befriended had kept his promise and made me Overlord but, after all, he had made no definite promise as to how long I was to retain that honor and, thus far, I had had no opportunity to test the efficacy of the magic words on the Golden Key. However, I decided to act bravely and told the Welsh ambassadors to hurry back to their own land and tell their King, Harold Dha, to mind his own affairs and stay out of Cornwall or I would work a magic on him that he would always remember.

I had a hard time enjoying the library that evening. Even the manuscript of *Elephantis* failed to thrill me. I told myself that this matter of politics was a most unsatisfactory one and, just as soon as I could, I would retire to a very quiet place such as Avalon-by-the-Sea.

The next day was stormy. So was the next day and on the third day frightened runners came and told of a large Irish army marching toward my castle; and soon after other runners told of a Welsh force within a day's march. Thus, before I could gather together my own nobles and their warriors the Hubelaire castle was almost surrounded, the Irish on one side and the Welsh on the other. It was safe enough with the drawbridge raised, but in a rather sorry situation for the Overlord of a great county.

Then to make the affair more complicated, Queen Broda asked for an interview with me. Her herald, a most interesting old man, said she plotted no treachery, but that, if I doubted her word, I could be accompanied by some hundred warriors. This was most complimentary, as I had less than thirty fighting men at that time in the castle. The herald said the queen preferred privacy and wished to meet me alone that night on the grassy green before the drawbridge. I told the herald I would be there and alone as the queen requested.

I spent the afternoon in moody silence in the library, trying to imagine what the lady wanted and what would satisfy her, but I finally give it up as something that was hopeless, as there seemed to be no telling what

she wanted, and, as far as I knew, no man had ever satisfied a woman — at least he had not lived to boast of it.

So, to pass the time, I read of the temptations of Saint Anthony, and a most weary time he had of it, what with the desert dust and the lively women he did not yield to — at least he boasted that he did not yield. Suddenly, to my great surprise, two men walked into the library: young FitzHugh and the unusual person who had by his mystical powers made me Overlord of Cornwall. My mysterious friend was dressed as a priest, but I had no difficulty recognizing him, especially when I looked at his feet.

"Hail, my dear sib," he said with a lilt in his voice, "and how do you like your new position of power?"

"In a way it is most satisfactory," I replied, "but with the Irish on one side of the castle and the Welsh on the other I feel somewhat like a squirrel in a cage. How did you and my loyal FitzHugh come here?"

"By a secret tunnel. We bring you news. The nobles of Cornwall have come to your aid. The entire country is in arms. Belvidere, Mallory, and Arthur have surrounded the Welsh King and are only waiting for your command to crush Harold Dha and his entire force. Now all you have to accomplish is to make your peace with Queen Broda and the Welsh must make peace or die."

"This is far better than I expected," I replied, "but it seems to me that the hardest part has been left to me, for you and my loyal Cornwall knights have only solved the Welsh problem, while I am left to deal with a woman."

"Use your charm, Cecil," the priest advised.

After supper I donned my best and walked slowly over the drawbridge to the grassy spot in front of the castle.

Queen Broda sat silent in her golden chariot. She was rather easy to look at and I certainly could not blame young FitzHugh for his infatuation. In fact I even considered the possibility of explaining to her that I was from France and that things might come to a worse pass than uniting our forces and giving the Welsh a sound thrashing, followed at an appropriate moment by a marriage that would unite the kingdoms of Ireland and Cornwall. But there was a determined glint in her eye and a pert way of holding her head that made me feel it would be best for me if I could induce her to take FitzHugh on faith — perhaps I could do more with some other woman than I could with her — maybe FitzHugh could handle her better and more easily.

She did not wait for me even to introduce myself, but began, "Are you going to give me what I want?"

"Well, that depends. So far, I have not the least idea of what you desire. Now if you want me to help you fight the Welsh, I think we can come to an understanding."

"Don't be silly. I had another reason for coming to Cornwall than thrashing the Welsh, though I have every reason to hate them. Harold Dha was foolish enough to think I would marry him, and his offer was a deadly insult. I just want one thing, and that is the head of your Lord FitzHugh."

I raised my eyebrows slightly.

"Why Queen Broda! I am astonished. I thought you and the young man were friendly. It would be too bad to deprive him of his head, and he so young and wonderfully debonair. What can the poor fellow have done, that you treat him thus?"

"He courted me and when I promised to marry him, told me that he was of Cornwall."

"Well, what of that? He had to be from somewhere, did he not?"

"Now, listen to me, Cecil, son of James and grandson of David, you who hold your place as Overlord by some chicanery that has caused endless talk in this part of the world. In my country we have elephants, cametunnus, metacollinarum, white and red lions. We have satyrs, pigmies and forty-ell giants, but we have no tailed men, and we most certainly are not going to have any, at least not as the husband of Queen Broda; so I have crossed the Irish Sea for the head of this man who has insulted me."

"Ireland," I replied, "must be a most interesting country. Have you ever heard of what we have in Cornwall? Have travelers told you of our Cyclopes, fauns, and centaurs; of our wild oxen, hyenas, and lamias; of our white merles, our crickets, and men with eyes before and behind? Just as soon as I can I intend to destroy all these evil monsters, and I really am surprised, Queen Broda—in fact I cannot understand at all—why it is you have allowed your fair land to be overrun by such trash as you tell of. Allow me to offer my services after I have cleansed Cornwall of its monstrosities. Did you know I have magical powers? How surprised were Gog and Magog when I conquered them, and Agit and Agimandi were absolutely dumbfounded when I bound them in chains and cast them into the Mare Nostrum. I have eaten of the plant Assidos, which protects the eater from evil spirits. I wear on my body the stone called Nudiosi, which prevents the sight from growing feeble and makes

it possible for the wearer to see a great distance. For example, at this very moment, I can see how this matter is going to end."

I could see that she was impressed, for she replied, "Just from looking at you, Lord Cecil, one would hardly believe you had all these powers; yet there must be something about you, because in no time at all you have assumed great authority here."

"Well, it is hard to tell about a man just by looking at him. But tell me one thing; what put this idea into your head about Lord FitzHugh having a tail?"

"He is a man of Cornwall and all men of that land are thus shaped.

Are you sure?"

"Certainly. You are not doubting my word, are you? You will not call me a liar. It happened this way. Years ago a saintly priest visited Strode, one of your villages, determined to convert the people and have them accept the Christian way of life. The Cornwall men living in that place, wishing to put a mark of contumely on the godly man, did not scruple to cut the tail off the horse he was riding. For this profane and inhospitable act, they covered themselves with eternal reproach. Since then all the men of Cornwall have been born with tails and no such man shall ever sit by my side and help me rule Ireland. The only way I can ease my pride is to take his head back with me"—here the poor lady began to cry—"and he should have thought of that and how it would make me feel, before he did speak of love to me. How would it be for me to be the mother of a poor little princess with a tail like an ape or a monkey?"

"That would not do at all," I replied in my most soothing way, and when I try to soothe the ladies I usually succeed. I remember very well how I completely changed the desire of a lady in Araby. At first she was minded to kill me, but by my power and a certain talisman I carried I compelled her to other ideas. So I soothingly said: "That would not do at all. But how would it be if, by my magic, I removed his tail? Suppose I made Lord FitzHugh like other men? Would you still demand his head?"

"Don't be silly," she replied archly. "Of course I would rather marry him than kill him, but I had no thought such like could be done. You mean without a scar? And if there was a little baby, would she be all right? Just like any other little baby?"

"If I promise you everything will be all right, everything *will* be all right. All you need do is trust me. Of course it will take a powerful magic. I will at once begin my sorcery, and it would be best to begin

with rhadomancy; later I may have to use the blood of a newborn child, but I would rather not do that unless it become necessary. Lord Fitz-Hugh is at present in the castle. Tomorrow you can be my guest for supper. I will invite King Harold Dha to join us. Since he is practically my prisoner he will be glad to eat with us and sign at that time a treaty of friendship, which he probably will keep, knowing he cannot fight both Cornwall and Ireland. After supper you, FitzHugh and I will go to my special cavern in the bowels of the earth, under my castle, and there I will do what is necessary to your lover and make him closer to your heart's desire."

"Promise me that it won't hurt him much?"

"Not as much as cutting off his head. Of course he may moan a little, but he is quite a brave man and I am certain he will be glad to endure the pain for your sake. I suppose you are anxious to return to Ireland at once, a happily married woman. But you must promise me one thing: Since I am doing this feat of magic to restore your lover to you, I would appreciate it if you moved part of your army so they could aid my warriors and thus show this Welshman that further resistance is useless; this will help greatly to make this a bloodless war."

She promised, and further said that she would gladly join me at supper on the morrow. When I left her she was seated silent in her golden chariot, but there was a look of happiness and hope on her lovely face.

Back in the castle I gave orders to my seneschal to prepare a proper feast for the next evening, as I would have Queen Broda, King Harold Dha, four of my nobles, and another very important personage as my guests. I sent a messenger to the King requesting his attendance at this banquet and suggesting that he had best come unarmed and with only one knight to attend him. Then I returned to the library, where Fitz-Hugh and the priest waited for me.

"What did she want?" asked the young Lord.

"A relatively simple request," I replied. "Either I will have to remove your tail or she will demand the right to remove your head. One or the other, or this wild Irish colleen of yours will join forces with the Welsh and wash Cornwall in blood. So off comes your tail."

"No one can take my tail off," he answered, surly and sad.

"And why not?"

"You know why," was all he would say.

Certainly in that mood he was no fit playmate for a girl like Queen

Broda. I saw that I would have to be rather clever or they never would marry, and there they were, madly in love and grieving themselves sick over the matter.

In spite of my best efforts and the excellent food, the banquet was a rather dismal occasion. I lost no time in showing Harold Dha what I thought of his behavior.

"My very good neighbor," I remarked so all could hear me, "I am deeply puzzled over your conduct. Why, if you wished to visit me and sign a treaty of everlasting friendship, was it necessary for you to bring an army with you?"

"You mistook my motives," he replied. "When I heard that Queen Broda intended to invade Cornwall it seemed only proper for me to come to your aid. I am certain you would do the same if the barbarians from the north invaded Wales."

"That was kindly and diplomatically said," I answered, bowing, "and I hope you will never forget the lessons you have learned on this visit. Now, after you have eaten I will ask you to sign this treaty I have prepared and then leave, taking a copy with you so you may refer to it in the future when your memory of these times fails you. It would be best for you to lead your army back to Wales, starting this very night. Both Cornish and Irish warriors will accompany you so your men will not lose their way in the dark forest. And now hail and farewell and get you gone, for I have very important duties to attend which do not require your presence."

After the banquet the three of us gathered in a dismal cell far down under the castle. It was a very unpleasant place, but it was very suitable for the terrific magic I contemplated. I had sent down some rattling chains, a brazier of charcoal and some incense which threw off a nauseating odor. I had a hound-dog tied in one corner and seven rats in a wire cage hanging from the wall. It all looked horrible enough, and even my blood chilled when the hound howled, which he did every time I looked up at the rats. I had a stool for the lady to sit upon but Fitz-Hugh and I stood. I began with the Lord's Prayer in Latin, said backward, a trick I had learned in my boyhood. Then I threw a dead mouse on the burning coals, closed my eyes and just muttered. Suddenly, with a howl that startled them all, even the dog, I jumped on poor Fitz-Hugh and began to wrestle with him. Finally I shook him loose from me and had his tail in my hand. After showing it to the Queen, I with shaking hand threw it on the charcoal, and as it burned it gave off a mighty offensive smell.

There was no doubt left in the mind of Queen Broda. The man of Cornwall had had a tail; by my magic I had taken the tail from him; now that he no longer had the tail she could marry him. She did not waste a moment but took the lad in her arms. She kissed him; he kissed her. I marveled that any two persons could spend so much energy in such osculations. Rather tired and slightly embarrassed at being a spectator to such amorous time-passing, I suggested that we return to the library.

There the priest waited for us. The young people talked matters over and arranged for their future. The Queen said she would never forget my kindness and that I need nevermore worry about the men of Wales. FitzHugh promised he would send me a golden chain to hold the Key to Cornwall, also some books he had which I would enjoy reading. So everything was lovely and that very night they were married by my priestly friend.

The next morning when they departed I went down the road a piece with them. Of course Lord FitzHugh was riding with his bride in her golden chariot. She was silent, but her sparkling eyes and dimpled cheeks did a lot of talking. Finally he stepped out of the chariot and came over to my horse to say good-bye.

"Cecil, Overlord of Cornwall and my very kind friend," he said earnestly, "how did you know I did not have a tail?"

"That was not hard to find out," I replied, laughing. "When I had the opportunity, I asked your mother."

We looked over at the beautiful bride.

Queen Broda sat silent in her golden chariot. She was smiling happily.



Inquisitions

THE MAN WHO CALLED HIMSELF POE

Edited by Sam Moskowitz

Doubleday & Company, Inc.,
Garden City, New York, 1969;
244pp; \$4.95.

Contents: *Introduction*, by Sam Moskowitz; *Edgar Allan Poe: A Biography in Brief*, by Thomas Ollive Mabbott; (*Fiction About Poe*) *The Valley of Unrest*, by Douglass Sherley; *My Adventure with Edgar Allan Poe*, by Julian Hawthorne; *In Which an Author and His Character Are Well Met*, by Vincent Starrett; *When It Was Moonlight*, by Manly Wade Wellman; *The Man Who Collected Poe*, by Robert Bloch; *The Man Who Thought He Was Poe*, by Michael Avallone; *Manuscript Found in a Drawer*, by Charles Norman; *The Dark Brotherhood*, by H. P. Lovecraft and August Derleth; *Castaway*, by Edmond Hamilton; (*Fiction by Poe (?)*) *The Lighthouse* by Edgar Allan Poe and Robert Bloch; *The Atlantis* by Peter Prospero, L.L.D.; P.S.; (*Poetry About Poe Culminating in a Meeting between H.P. Lovecraft and Edgar Allan Poe*) *Edgar Allan Poe*, by Adolphe de Castro; *St. John's*

Churchyard, by R.H. Barlow; *In a Sequestered Churchyard Where Once Poe Walked*, by H.P. Lovecraft; *Providence: Two Gentlemen Meet at Midnight*, by August W. Derleth; *Untitled Valentine Poem to Edgar Allan Poe from His Wife, 1846*, by Virginia Poe; *Baltimore, October 3rd*, by Robert A. W. Lowndes.

Here is a truly unique anthology, one of the fiction in which Edgar Allan Poe appears as a character, plus a posthumous collaboration in which a current author completes an unfinished fragment, as August Derleth has done with much Lovecraft material; four chapters from an Utopia novel which might be Poe's work; some poetry about EAP, and well-written introductions to each entry by the anthologist.

The late Thomas Ollive Mabbott's brief biographical introduction is particularly valuable for its suggested list of further reading, and I can certainly recommend the 1934 (corrected) edition of Hervey Allen's *Israfel*. (As Moskowitz indicates, it is not highly regarded by Poe scholars in general—Mabbott himself ranks the Quinn biography, which he acknowledges to be overly defensive, higher; but I strongly sus-

pect that Sam's guess as to why Allen is downgraded has hit the nail squarely.)

The Valley of Unrest (preceded by Poe's poem of that title) by Douglass Sherley is a fascinating resurrection, for which the anthologist deserves much credit as it was his own discovery (Mabbott had never heard of it until Sam showed him the copy). The early section, dealing with EAP has a ring of truth about it; and while the story is not what I'd call a thriller, it is nonetheless moving and makes a good starting point after you've rehearsed the facts of EAP's life in the biographical introduction.

My Adventure with Edgar Allan Poe is a wry piece, which shows that Nathaniel Hawthorne's son had interesting ideas, even though his style could not approach the individuality of his father's.

In Which an Author and His Character Are Well Met, by Vincent Starrett, is also moving, though we have not yet gotten in to much weirdness. One thing about it bothers me: Poe did, of course, drink too much but the irony of this is that what was "too much" for EAP was a ridiculously small amount. Many who knew him well testified that a single glass of wine was sufficient to make him completely drunk; and in his biography, Hervey Allen tells of a period (when Poe was employed) of moderate affluence, so that there was a decanter of wine with a small dipper beside it on the mantelpiece of Poe's front room. EAP would take one dipperful on his way out to the office, go there directly, without stopping at a saloon, and would arrive

visibly intoxicated, So the number of bottles (even small bottles) of wine which Poe manages to down in this Starrett tale, before the fantasy sequence starts disturbs me considerably, as the rest has a very nice and authentic flavor about it.

I have no quibbles at all about Manly Wade Wellman's *When It Was Moonlight*; this struck me as a very fine little horror tale at first reading (*UNKNOWN*, February 1940), and re-reading confirms my original impression.

Also effective is Robert Bloch's, *The Man Who Collected Poe*, despite its debt to Lovecraft in more ways than one. One of those ways is something I disagreed with HPL about when I first wrote to him; and while his reply as to why he considered it right for a story of weird discovery, etc., to end in total destruction of the fearful books, etc., and of the main characters is indeed a closely-reasoned one, I still cannot accept it. Which does not in any way detract from how well Bloch has worked within this convention.

Michael Avallone's *The Man Who Thought He Was Poe*, was new to me; and if you can refrain from looking through the book, so that your eyes do not fall upon the final sentence—all caps—you may be misled, as I'm sure I would have been, so that the finale is a surprise. In any event, it's very well worked out.

Charles Norman's *Manuscript Found in a Drawer* is new and good; and the Lovecraft-Derleth story, *The Dark Brotherhood* is one of the best of the posthumous collaborations—one which convinces me that this is just about the way HPL would have

worked out the story himself. Had he lived, my feeling is that HPL would have written more stories which we would consider science fiction.

For this reason, Edmond Hamilton's *Castaway* is wonderfully suggestive of both Poe and Lovecraft. The theme itself (forgetting that EAP is the lead character) is not a new one in weird or science fiction-which again goes to show that positive originality, so far as dreaming up something which no one, but positively no one, has even done before in print is hardly important. You will recognize the theme rather soon (unless, of course, you've never encountered it before), but the discerning reader will see almost as soon that it doesn't matter. Hamilton has made it new.

Bloch's working out of the 600 words that Poe wrote under the title *The Lighthouse* adds up to a very weird tale indeed, but I just do not find it convincing as a Poe story; that is even allowing for the necessary differences in style and thought, while I get the feeling that

The Dark Brotherhood is in the true Lovecraft manner, so that I might suspect HPL if I could read it again for the first time with authors' names missing, I do not get this effect in relation to EAP with *The Lighthouse*.

With the four chapters from *The Atlantis*-I pass. I'd want to re-read a great deal of EAP before so much as making an educated guess; there are certainly many elements which remind me of EAP's more whimsical pieces, but other elements which just do not feel right for Poe.

It would not be seemly of me to comment upon the final section, poetry.

All in all, I remain very happy at appearing in such a collection as this, and Doubleday has done a very fine production job. There's just one complaint I have to make about it: the running heads on both left and right hand pages give only the title of the book; it would have been helpful had the right hand pages listed the particular story instead. RAWL



The Duel Of The Sorcerers

by Paul Ernst

RICK BALLARD GAZED once again at the tiny inflamed marks on the throat of the unconscious girl. His face, drawn with worry over this mysterious illness that had attacked her, had grown even more pallid at the words of Tholl.

"But, Professor!" he exclaimed. "What you say is impossible. Impossible! No one but a superstitious child could believe in such things."

Professor Tholl shook his head impatiently. It was a noble head. White hair, cut long, cascaded down almost to his collar; his white beard suggested wisdom and venerability. A large, strong nose rose incisively over firm lips and chin. His eyes were gray, cool and piercing. "If it is not that— what is it?"

Rick Ballard gnawed at his lip in perplexity. "How should I know? Even the doctors couldn't tell."

The combined night staff of the hospital had just left the room, after having bent over the girl who lay like a pale statue in her trance-like state, and studied those inflamed little marks on her throat with the grave profundity of ignorance. No two of the doctors had arrived at the same conclusion regarding the cause of the punctures.

"Of course they couldn't tell," said Professor Tholl. "But *I* can, although I wouldn't dream of declaring the truth to such advanced— sci-

PAUL FREDERICK ERNST (1902--) was a pulpeteer whose first appearance in *WEIRD TALES* was *Beyond the Power of Man*, in the December 1928 issue. My first encounter with him was a very good science-fiction mystery tale, *Hidden In Glass*, *AMAZING STORIES*, April 1931; then two issues later there was a real chiller: *The Incredible Formula*. His "Doctor Satan" series in WT was very popular for a time, and several of these have been run in *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES*. He had 37 stories in WT, two of them serials, and he was last seen there with *The Tree of Life*, July 1954 (reprinted from the September 1930 issue). Four other of his stories were selected for WT's reprint department, and the last new one to appear in their pages was *Outbound*, September 1945. The present story is one of two that he had in the short-lived *STRANGE TALES*.

entists." His firm lips moved with a trace of contempt. "I tell you those marks are the marks of fangs. The fangs of—a vampire!"

Rick drew in his breath with a hissing sound. "Impossible!" he repeated.

"What else could have caused them?"

"A—a rat, perhaps? Some large, poisonous insect?"

"In a modern hospital? No, my young friend! Such a thing would be more incredible than vampires!"

Rick gazed long at the old man. Already he felt drawn to him, liked him and respected him, though he had not met him until two days ago.

Two days ago! The thought sent Rick's mind off on an agonized path...

Two short days ago Priscilla Rand, the golden-haired girl who now lay in deathly, pallid beauty on the narrow bed, had been normal and healthy. Rick Ballard and she had been an average young engaged couple, who were to be married as soon as his finances permitted. No cloud showed on their sky.

Then, two evenings ago, Rick had called at her home at eight-thirty, to find chaos there and to see the Rand family physician examining an unconscious girl, and to hear him admitting that he did not know what was wrong with her. All he could discover were the two marks on her throat—the marks that appeared to have been produced by some sharp-toothed, rodent thing.

There had followed a trip to the hospital, medical conferences which got nowhere, and forty-eight hours during which Priscilla Rand lay in

a coma that defied attempts to bring her to consciousness. Also had followed a night in which two new marks appeared on her throat, just above the partly healed ones that had shown that first night.

On the first night, shortly after Priscilla had been brought in, this Professor Tholl had entered the room. No one of the doctors appeared to have more than a speaking acquaintance with him; none appeared to know just who he was or what he wanted; but he seemed to have unlimited permission in the hospital.

He had stayed with Rick the first night after the others had left, sympathizing with him and studying those small red marks—continually studying them. Now, tonight, he had remained again. And tonight he had made this declaration: "Only one thing could have made those marks. A vampire!"

Rick shuddered. Two days ago, at mention of that word, he would have laughed. Now, gazing at those sinister little red dots in the soft white flesh of Priscilla's throat, and listening to the distinguished-looking elderly man beside him, Rick didn't know what to think!

Professor Tholl smiled at him. "Is it so hard to believe? But, I tell you. I *know*! Have I spent thirty years of study not to know something of vampirism? Why, the odor in the room, alone, is enough to tell infallibly what's wrong!"

"Odor?" echoed Rick almost stupidly. His eyes, bloodshot with worry, went questioningly toward the professor.

"Yes. Surely, you've noticed it—both last night and tonight? I am surprised the physicians here didn't remark on it."

Rick sniffed. He *had* noticed a slight odor, a shade stronger than the smell of antiseptics usually to be found in a hospital, but he had dismissed it from his mind. He wasn't used to hospitals; he had accepted it as a natural odor. Now he concentrated on it again.

More distinctly it came to his nostrils; and now he shivered a little, and an inexplicable icy feeling crept up his spine. A faint but unmistakable smell of things moldering and ancient—a sort of stench of *death*—hung in the air of that small room. Or was it but the product of his imagination . . .

"You're really smelling it," said Professor Tholl. "You're not imagining it. It is the odor of the vampire. The visiting card, so to speak, a vampire leaves behind. Well, are you convinced?"

"I don't know . . ." whispered Rick.

"But you *must* be convinced!" said the professor earnestly. "I need

your help, Mr. Ballard. And to help me—you must believe! I think I can prove to you that I am right.'

"In heaven's name—how?" Rick burst out.

Tholl leaned again over the unconscious girl. He listened to her faint breathing, stared at the red marks. Then he nodded.

"I am almost certain that tonight the vampire was driven off by the night nurse before he had completed his unearthly purpose. The regularity of Miss Rand's breathing, and the look of those fang marks, both indicate it. If that is true, he may return! We will watch and see."

"But—" Rick stopped. Then he spread his hands in a gesture of utter despair. "All right. I'll do anything you say. Anything! Consider me entirely in your hands."

Efficiently, methodically, Professor Tholl set the stage for the possible return of the thing he stated was responsible for Priscilla Rand's baffling illness.

He turned out the lights, save for a dim night-light. He opened the window, deliberately, a foot or more, and closed the transom. Then he called the night nurse and informed her that he would be in attendance on Miss Rand all night, and that she needn't come to her room unless specifically summoned. After that, calling an interne, he arranged for Rick and himself to spend the rest of the night in the room directly across the hall.

At five minutes past one they went to this room—to wait. Tholl closed the door . . .

"But, assuming there really is truth in what you've told me," expostulated Rick, "how will you know when the—the thing has attacked her if you keep the door closed?"

"My boy," said Professor Tholl, laying his hand for a moment on Rick's shoulder, "a little later, when, God willing, we have trapped this creature of darkness, I will tell you something of myself and of the powers I have cultivated. Just now I'll only say—I *will* know."

Rick's lips opened for a bewildered reply, but the professor held up his hand sharply for silence. He motioned to the bed. Rick sat down on it. The professor seated himself on the chair, and at once assumed an attitude so intent, so strained, that Rick could only stare at him with increased bewilderment in which was mingled a vague fear of imminent evil.

There settled over them an intense, painful silence. Now and then soft footsteps sounded in the corridor outside as the night nurse for the floor answered some number flashed on the frosted glass of the callboard.

From far away came the chime of a tower-clock marking the quarter-hours. Save for these sounds there was no noise.

Forty-five minutes passed, during which Rick felt a mounting premonition that some dreadful thing was about to happen. Forty-five minutes in which the white-haired man beside him sat as motionless and rigid as a block of stone, concentrating in some obscure way on the strange thing he asserted threatened Priscilla Rand in the room across the hall.

And now the professor's attitude was broken. He sat up straighter. His hands clenched. His eyes narrowed to flaming gray slits.

"It's come!" he said tensely. "It's come! And—it is *he*!"

He started for the door, moving quickly but noiselessly. "Follow me," he whispered to Rick. "But on your life make no sound."

Rick tiptoed after him, out the door, across the corridor, to the door of Priscilla's room. And as he went, he felt the cold perspiration start out on his body, felt his heart pounding violently. Professor Tholl's every look and gesture implied authority and learning. In spite of all his training, in spite of all his sophisticated contempt for "superstitions," Rick felt that this man must be right in whatever he might say.

But, if Tholl was right, what awful spectacle would be revealed behind the closed door of Priscilla's room!

The professor glanced at Rick. "Steady!" he whispered. "Keep your head, whatever happens."

Then, with a long breath, the professor laid his hand on the knob, turned it abruptly, flung open the door and bounded into the dimly lit room with Rick close behind.

Never would Rick forget the sensation of that moment—the first dreadful knowledge of the presence they had surprised at its dread work within those four walls. The shock was stamped on his brain in lines of flame.

First there was the odor of corruption as they stood inside the closed doorway and blinked in the dim light. That terrible, sickening stench! Stronger, more intense it now was than it had been when Rick had first noticed it. This was the unmistakable odor of the grave—of rotting corpses and utter putridity. It was breathtaking, overpowering. He felt that if he was forced to breathe it any longer he would go mad!

And then he saw the thing they had come to seek; saw it on the bed with Priscilla—on her very pillow, half hidden by her long golden hair—next her bared throat.

Something small and dark and batlike, it was barely to be seen in the vague light. Something with a reddened and repulsive snout, that stared at them with beady, wicked eyes, and squeaked and mewed. Some-

thing that flapped loathsome wings and darted up in flight—even as Professor Tholl leaped to the window, and closed it shut.

"We've got him!" grated Tholl, his voice harsh with triumph. "By heaven, we've got him! My sin is expiated —"

Hoarse despair suddenly cracked his voice. "The transom!" he cried. "My God, the transom —"

Rick whirled to stare at it. They had left it closed when they left Priscilla's room, but now it was open. Even as he leaped to draw down the sliding transom-rod, there was a rapid rustling of the dry wings. A loathsome soft, furred thing darted up toward the transom. For an instant it darkened the light shining in from the hall outside. Then, with one final sharp squeak, it was gone.

II

THE PROFESSOR GROANED aloud. His shoulders dropped; his silvery beard swept his broad old chest as his head was bowed at an angle of utter defeat and abasement.

"Fool! Fool!" he muttered. "The chance of my lifetime to exterminate him like the deadly rat he is—and I hadn't wit enough to observe that he'd opened the transom to provide a way of escape for himself! May God forgive me."

Rick, meanwhile, was gasping in the poisonous air of the room.

"Do you mind—" he said finally, "is it all right to open the window? This sickening smell . . ."

"Yes, yes, open it," said Tholl wearily. "It doesn't matter now. Nothing matters. He's escaped—gone . . ."

Rick flung the window open, and gradually the odor of corruption and death faded from the room. Then he bent over Priscilla Rand, who still lay motionless on the bed—a marble white figure that might have been mistaken for a statue save for her faint breathing.

In Rick's eyes was a new frenzy of fear for her, now that he had seen what he had, and could no longer believe that the impossible, the terrible diagnosis of Professor Tholl was incorrect.

He turned toward the old man. "And now?" he said.

"Now we'll go across to the room assigned us. But this time we'll leave the door open! Our enemy is still very near us. I can feel that . . . sense it . . ."

Tholl started toward the door. But before he could reach it, it had swung open to reveal a figure.

It was an ordinary figure, a body of average height, clad in the plain dark garments of the professional man. But the face atop the conventionally draped shoulders was far from average!

It was a long and narrow countenance, with a long, high-arched nose and a narrow, long chin. In the dead whiteness of the skin—an unwholesome, greenish pallor—were set blood-red lips like a fresh wound. The eyes were dark and narrow and had a hint of a slant like the eyes of an Oriental, but as none of the other features carried out the hint, this was probably an individual and not a racial peculiarity.

The man stood there a moment, peering at them out of his secretive, narrow, black eyes.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded curtly at last. "The hospital has long been closed to visitors for the evening."

Rick glared. He had seen this curious looking fellow, one of the staff doctors, once before; and he had formed for him one of the reasonless, instantaneous hatreds with which complete strangers now and then inspire one.

"We have permission to be here," he said angrily. He turned to the professor for confirmation. But Tholl seemed not to have heard what had been said. He was staring at the doctor, staring with an odd intensity that left deep puckers around his keen old eyes.

And then came a most unlooked-for interruption.

From the bed behind them sounded a rustling of bed-clothes. Priscilla Rand, immobile as a statue for over forty-eight hours, was moving!

Both Rick and Tholl whirled to gaze at her . . .

She was sitting bolt upright. Her pale lips were parted a trifle; her face, framed by her silky gold hair, had the dreamy look of a sleepwalker; and her wide eyes were turned full on the red-lipped, dark-eyed doctor.

Then, abruptly, she screamed. It was terrible, that sound, cutting like a knife thrust through the air of the bleak room.

"Oh!" she choked, raising her hand to point fearfully at the doctor.

"Oh! Stop him! Stop—"

She fell back on the bed, as lifeless as before.

Tholl's bearded lips writhed back in a snarl that was almost animalistic as he turned to face the doctor.

"So it's you!" he grated. "You! Spawn of hell! And you dare to stand there and ask me what I'm doing here!"

Cold curiosity was the only emotion reflected on the doctor's face. He smiled, a maddening, supercilious smile that made Rick ache to plant

his fist in the death mask of a countenance, though he had as yet no idea of the real significance of the scene.

"You have made a mistake in identities," the man told Tholl. "I'm quite sure we've never seen each other before. My name is—"

"Your name is Quoy!" burst out the professor, his voice cracking with impotent rage. "And you saw me, just three minutes ago, in this room!"

"You must be insane," replied the doctor. "Come, will you leave here peaceably, or shall I have you thrown out?"

Tholl was so enraged he could not reply. For a moment Rick feared he might be about to have a seizure; but after a time the professor regained control of himself.

"We shall leave for the present. Doctor Quoy. But we shall spend the rest of the night across the corridor from this room, with both doors open so we can see this girl and be able to rush to her side at a moment's notice if necessary. And we shall not leave *you* for long. Your career is nearly done! You understand?"

A mocking glint appeared in the doctor's beady black eyes, but he only said: "I understand nothing save that you must be mad."

He stood aside in a manner so compelling that there was nothing for Rick and the professor to do but walk out of the room.

They crossed the corridor to the room given them earlier in the evening. The man, Doctor Quoy, watched them closely, his narrow eyes glittering in the corridor light.

"Good night, Professor," he said suavely, when they had reached their door, and stood pointedly holding it open so they could gaze across and see the sleeping girl.

Tholl glared at him, his shoulders erect and defiant. But when the doctor had turned and walked away, when the chalk-white, red-lipped countenance was no longer in sight, the professor's attitude changed. All the defiance was out of it.

"Who *is* he?" demanded Rick.

Tholl gazed at him with somber eyes. "Can you ask? Didn't you notice his lips?"

"Yes, but—"

"You didn't notice anything peculiar about them?"

"It struck me they were unusually red, that's all."

"You didn't see—that tiny drop of blood at their corners?"

Rick felt the hair on his scalp crawl. "You mean . . ." he whispered at last, though now, of course, he knew.

"I mean that he is our antagonist—that smooth-spoken, snaky-eyed creature that just ordered us out of Miss Rand's room."

Rick started twice to speak before he could get his incoherent thoughts into words. "Professor, this is—I can't quite—I think you'd better explain, as well as you can, what this is all about. I hope"—he smiled wanly—"you have a fairly reasonable explanation to make. I'm not feeling at all sure of my sanity right now!"

"You're sane enough, my son," sighed Tholl; "though perhaps, when you've heard the explanation you ask for, you'll wish for the forgetfulness of madness. But I'll tell you as simply as I can the events leading up to this scene you just witnessed in Miss Rand's room."

III

"THE THINGS I AM ABOUT TO tell you," said Professor Tholl, pacing back and forth across the floor as he talked, "are things which, in this so-called civilized age, are held to be unbelievable. Nevertheless, I think you will believe them; you've seen the results of one of their manifestations!

"Thirty years ago I was fortunate enough—or so I thought then—to receive an inheritance from an uncle that let me resign my chair at a western college and devote my time to a hobby that had fascinated me since childhood. That hobby was supernatural control of natural phenomena. In a word, what used to be called black magic.

"It was always a conviction of mine that there was some real basis for the old superstitions; that certain beings were able to do miraculous things as a result of their mastery of occult powers; that, centuries ago, there really existed such persons as wizards, witches, magicians.

"With this inheritance, I was able to go into the subject with perfect freedom and to give it my utmost powers of concentration. I devoted to the task the large amount of money I now had at my disposal, and a brain trained to think along logical, constructive lines.

"As a first step I accumulated a library such as never before in history had been collected under one roof. Every tattered old parchment on demonology and witchcraft that I could find I bought and studied. In my library I had over four thousand works of this sort, the majority of them being the only known existing copies of their kind and, I am sure, unknown to any other collectors.

"In addition I equipped a chemical laboratory in my house and set out with the latest and most modern apparatus to test the ancient

magic formulae listed in my dusty books to see if they would work. Some of them did! I won't go into details. I'll only say that some of the experiments I brought to successful conclusions there in my lonely laboratory should have driven any mortal into giving up the subject in terror and burning the whole gruesome library of formulae and incantations.

"Rashly, I went on and on with the work. And five years ago, after twenty-five years of intensive study I learned something that I considered my crowning discovery.

"I learned that there existed a certain hitherto unheard of chapter of the works of Cagliostro, the great Italian necromancer, which contained texts more revolutionary, more staggering to the imagination in the power they gave their possessor, than all the works of all my library combined!

"I determined to get this fragment of Cagliostro's book of rituals. As I was getting old and knew there would be a long period of searching needed to uncover this rare document, I decided to hire an assistant to help me.

"Naturally, I picked an assistant with a great deal of care. Such work as mine was dangerous, not only because of the risk involved in dealing with supernatural things, but also because of the attitude the majority of the public has in regard to such matters. Most people haven't got out of the old witch-burning attitude; I didn't dare take any chances of my line of endeavor being made public.

"The man I finally hired seemed ideal. He was from a famous college, extremely intelligent, quiet and self-effacing. He was a graduate physician. From the very start, he showed an interest in demonology fully as great as my own—so great, indeed, that I could not resist the temptation to teach him all I knew and have him help me in the laboratory as well as in the work of tracing that fatal lost chapter of Cagliostro's. His name was Quoy—Doctor Herbert Quoy.

"Three years went by. Twice I sent Doctor Quoy to Italy to verify rumors of the location of the document I sought. Each time he came back and reported failure to find it. Meanwhile, the student was surpassing the master! I was neither stupid nor ungifted at my chosen work: but he, it seemed, had pure genius for it. Rapidly I found my own knowledge and ability along the forbidden line of the black arts being eclipsed by his. It puzzled me that with three years of effort, he could go beyond the mark I had reached in nearly thirty years. But I soon found the reason for it!"

The muscles of Tholl's jaws set in harsh ridges.

"I came into the laboratory unexpectedly one day to find him attempting an experiment of his own—working on calculations which, it developed, were to cheat death in a way I will make clear in a moment or two.

"Warned by a queer new rebelliousness against my authority that had lately come into Quoy's bearing, I had forbidden him to use my apparatus or library alone. When I saw him now, I was angry; and I tiptoed toward him, intending to administer a punishment, with a simple occult formula I know, that should teach him manners in the future! So, moving softly, I got near enough to see over his shoulder, and he was reading a discolored old parchment written in Latin.

"I saw at a glance that it was not a parchment I was familiar with, so I looked closer. And, as he turned a page, I saw a heading—a name—that sent the lust of murder to my heart.

"The document was the lost chapter of Cagliostro! He had actually unearthed it on one of his trips to Italy, and had returned to lie about its discovery and keep it for himself! Wonderful, dreadful storehouse of supernatural power! *That* was why he had progressed so swiftly in our experiments. *That* was why his three short years of experience had made him more adept at the dark arts than my thirty years had made me.

"At this point he became aware of my presence. He jumped up, with the look of a fiend in his eyes, and his hands began to weave rapidly before my face in a way that would presently call down on me one of the deadliest spells described in my secret library.

"More quickly than I had thought I could force my old body to move, I had leaped at him and knocked him down. In the fall his head struck the corner of a work-bench . . . "

The professor's hands moved spasmodically at his sides.

"I went a little insane during the next few moments. I believe now he was dead with the force of the blow against the work-bench. But I didn't think of that, then. I caught up a heavy stool, and my arms were tired before I stopped bringing it down, with all my strength on his head. Minutes had passed before I regained my self control—to find myself gazing down at a man whom, in the eyes of our civilized laws, I had murdered.

"I had no remorse for that murder. I knew I had rid the world of a great potential menace, for I knew now that this man was all evil—an

evil intelligence, linked with all the hellish knowledge contained in Cagliostro's document. What chaos the combination might not accomplish!

"I hid the body in a secret vault in the cellar of the big house I own, here in the city. I burned my library, all but the precious Cagliostro, which I couldn't bear to part with. I easily turned aside all inquiries into the disappearance of my employee, Doctor Quoy. And I thought that the matter was closed. This was two years ago."

The professor groaned and buried his head in his hands.

"I soon found that I was hideously wrong—that the matter was *not* closed! I discovered it because I came home late one evening from a visit with a friend to find my Cagliostro gone!

"The library, now furnished with ordinary books, had been double-locked when I went out, and when I came in was still double-locked. The safe, in which I had put the invaluable document, was still closed and showed no signs of having been tampered with. Yet when I opened it the chapter was gone!

"There could only be one answer to the problem of its theft. But for a time my mind refused to accept that answer . . .

"I went upstairs to my laboratory, more dead than alive, and employed all my acquired powers of divination to the problem. All the rest of the night I worked. And I learned at last just what had occurred.

"Doctor Quoy had passed from life to death with full knowledge of Cagliostro's secret of circumventing death impressed on his intelligence. Of partially circumventing it, that is; only partially! Which is at once the most terrible part of the whole thing—and the chief weapon in our hands

"The evil soul of the man had sought and found a lodging in some body of one who had just died a natural death. That body—not mutilated beyond usage as I had mutilated his—he could not bring to life. But he could preserve it indefinitely, bend it to his bidding—*undead*! Through special arts, he could make of himself a vampire and still mingle with the world of the living, though not actually alive himself. And so he goes, with infinite powers at his command to do his evil will—a corpse unburied, animated with a live man's hate, bound to the frightful existence of the vampire.

"And that, my friend, is the Thing that now confronts us!"

Rick drew a long breath. Then he sprang to his feet and started hastily toward the door.

"Stop!" commanded the professor. "Where are you going?"

"To turn this monster over to the police!" exclaimed Rick. But Tholl slowly shook his head.

"I thought so. But really it won't do. Can't you guess what would happen to you if you went to the police with any such tale as this, in spite of the proof offered by the fang marks on Priscilla's throat?"

Rick stopped in his tracks. He *could* guess. Easily! He would land in a madhouse!

Then he started on again, red glints in his eyes. But again the professor stopped him as he read his thoughts.

"It will do you no good to seek out this Doctor Quoy personally, either. In the first place, you would be as helpless as a child in his hands. In the second place, he won't be here any longer."

"Why won't he?"

Professor Tholl pointed to the window. The first red streaks of dawn were showing.

"As a vampire, he is chained to darkness. From sundown to sunrise he moves and has consciousness. During the daylight hours he must lie in his vampire's trance in whatever dark hiding place he has found for himself."

Rick was unsatisfied with this. Incredulously, he went on out into the corridor. He returned in a moment, biting his lips.

"Well?" said Tholl.

"The night nurse says Doctor Quoy has gone. She says he is never to be found in the hospital after four in the morning."

During all the professor's bizarre account, Rick had wavered between credulity and unbelief. Naturally enough, all his training—the training of all normal people—argued against the possibility of such things. Now he burst out with one of his doubts.

"You say this man, Doctor Quoy, worked with you for three years. Yet you didn't recognize him, in Priscilla's bedroom, for several minutes. How was that?"

"Because the body he now inhabits is not the body I was familiar with," Tholl pointed out. "You remember, I said his spirit—soul, intelligence, call it what you please—took possession of the remains of another man, one whom I'd never seen, when I clubbed his own body into such a state that he couldn't use it any more. That was why I could recognize the essential Quoy only by the agitation of Priscilla Rand and by that little drop of fresh blood my eyes finally distinguished on his lips."

"How did you happen to be here so opportunely in the first place?" demanded Rick bluntly.

"For the last two years," replied Tholl, "ever since my discovery that this evil genius was still abroad, I have haunted every hospital, every hotel and rooming house, every place in the city where people sleep in large numbers, on the chance that some poor unfortunate would turn up with those significant fang marks on his throat. When I heard of such a case here at Grace Hospital, I rushed over at once to see if at last I was on the track of Quoy. The rest you know."

A long, uneven sigh came from Rick's lips. "Yes, the rest I know. And I believe now . . . there's nothing else for it but to believe. But, Professor, now that you have succeeded in locating this menace, what's to be done about it?"

A grim look came over Tholl's venerable old face.

"As I said, in Doctor Quoy's vampirism lies his vulnerability, and our chief weapon. We cannot attack him with much hope of success when he is fully conscious, or when he is clothed in man's form. But if we could locate the hiding place where he lies in a coma every day, or if we could trap him in his helpless bat-shape as we nearly succeeded in doing just a few hours ago . . . "

The gleam that came up into his fanatic old eyes completed the meaning of his sentence.

"Why," said Rick gloomily, "did this horrible thing have to smash into the lives of Priscilla and myself? Why was Priscilla picked out as one of the victims?"

"That was pure fate," said Tholl. "Out of the hundreds of thousands of women in the city, Priscilla was happened on by Quoy. It might have been any other. But as long as it *was* Priscilla, and as long as you are so directly involved, you will help me exterminate this fiend?"

"With my life," said Rick. "Give me whatever orders you please, and I'll see that they're carried out!"

The broad firm hand of the young man met the slightly unsteady hand of the old one in a tight clasp. Then they went to Professor Tholl's huge old house to get what rest they could during the balance of the forenoon.

IV

IT WAS EARLY AFTERNOON. The two had slept fitfully,

all morning; and now, with little appetite, they were having an uneasy breakfast.

"Shouldn't we have gotten Quoy's address from the hospital last night, and forced our way in there at once?" said Rick.

"For what reason?" inquired the professor.

"To try to catch him there unawares."

Tholl's heavy eyebrows went up. "I'm afraid you don't understand the nature of our struggle with this man—this animated corpse, to be exact—even yet. Do you really think he would stay openly at a known address during the daylight hours when he is powerless?"

"He might."

"There's little chance of that."

"Anyway," said Rick doggedly, "I think we ought to phone the hospital, find out where he lives, and pay the place a visit just on the chance."

The professor shrugged. "Well, it won't hurt, I suppose," he decided. "I know in advance we won't find Quoy there. But we may find some possession of his, some weapon to be turned against him."

Rick telephoned the hospital and found that Doctor Quoy was listed as residing in a large, well known apartment building about half a mile from Tholl's house. Also, Rick found out something which astonished him, but which the professor had rather expected.

Doctor Quoy had resigned precipitately from the hospital. He had sent his resignation by messenger immediately after leaving, just before dawn, that morning.

"Hopeful, in a way," muttered Tholl. "It shows he feared us at least a little. Only too little, probably. He knows, and rightly, that he is my superior in occult power. Well, shall we go?"

A few minutes later they stood before the hall door of the apartment given as Doctor Quoy's. Boldly, Rick rang the bell. But there was no answer.

"How will we get in?" he asked. Simple as the point was, he hadn't thought of it till now. "I suppose we could break the door down, but that would raise a lot of nuisance for us."

The professor motioned him to stand aside. "Bolts and keys are not the only things that open doors," he said.

Whereupon, he did a curious thing. Rick couldn't quite see what it was, and was never afterward able exactly to describe it. He only knew that the professor's hand barely touched the door knob. The extreme tips

of his fingers passed lightly over the polished brass just once. Then his hand seemed to tense, and Rick saw his thumb curve inward till the nail was on the palm.

"Now, open it," said Tholl calmly, stepping back.

Rick turned the knob. The door opened. "For the good of society," he exclaimed, "I hope you never turn criminal Professor!"

"And how about the creature who already *has* turned criminal—whose powers make mine look like child's play?" rejoined Tholl.

Rick was silent at that, while a new conception of precisely what they were up against, was born in his mind.

The two men entered the apartment. As Tholl had been sure it would be, the place was empty. Furthermore, it was stripped of most of its belongings. All Quoy's personal effects were gone; only a few unimportant possessions were left. He had fled.

The professor disregarded this evidence of flight, which to Rick was crushing discovery. With his silvery beard almost touching the floor, he crouched here and there, like a great animal on a scent, searching for something.

"What are you hunting for?" said Rick.

"For anything that might give us a clue as to Quoy's real quarters," said the professor abstractedly. "The secret, hidden place where he sleeps the daily sleep of the vampire—and where we can ferret him out and drive an aspen stake through his heart! That's what we must discover now. For never again, I'm afraid, will we have the opportunity to crush him while he's busy at his vampire feast."

For nearly an hour they searched the place; but there was uncovered only one thing out of the ordinary, one clue; a sort of miniature stage set up on an escritoire. Over the top of this boxlike little contrivance were draped strings, as though puppets were moved over the stage for some reason or other. A mysterious, seemingly useless device it seemed to Rick. To the professor its meaning was plain enough; but it added nothing to his inadequate store of information. He knew only that Doctor Quoy, while mocking him at the hospital the night before, had yet opponent to hide securely from him.

"And with a whole city to hide in, we'll *never* find him!" despaired Rick. "Meanwhile-- what about Priscilla?"

"Perhaps he won't attack her again," said the professor, though his eyes evaded Rick's as he said it. "But he'll certainly attack us! You and I are the only two who know his secret. He can never rest till he's de-

stroyed us. It's through attacks he'll probably make on us in the near future that we may be able to trace him. We'll hope so, anyhow."

They left the doctor's deserted rooms, then, and went to the hospital. There they were greeted with good news. Priscilla had finally regained consciousness, to tell them, with horror-filled eyes, of vague and terrible dreams that had pursued her during the black hours of her trance.

Until nearly midnight Tholl and Rick stayed with her. Then Rick, upon her falling into a normal sleep, decided to go home and get some of his things.

"No, no!" said Tholl. "You're safer here. You can't go out at this time of night—alone!"

"I just want to go to my diggings long enough to get a change of linen and my razor and a few other things," Rick said. But the professor would not hear of this.

"Send a messenger for them, or wait until tomorrow. What may threaten you away from my poor protection, I can't say. But *something* might."

Seeing the old man's perturbation, Rick promised to send for his clothes. But as soon as he had left to go to the desk to phone, he changed his mind. It had suddenly struck him that there was a principle at stake here; a point of honor that was not to be disregarded.

"Let that poisonous rat drive me away from my own home?" snapped Rick at last. "I'm damned if I will!"

He left word at the desk for the professor that he had gone to his apartment, but would be right back, and then went out onto the street.

In Priscilla's room, Tholl shifted his chair nearer the bed while his eyes were almost unblinking in their alertness. Should those tiny, ominous marks appear once more on the girl's throat, should the vampire visit her once again, it was probable she would sink into an unconsciousness from which she would never wake!

V

AFTERWARD, IN THE LIGHT OF the sinister things he came to learn, Rick could hardly conceive of the foolhardiness that had led him to go alone, in the dead of night, to his apartment.

At the time, however, he thought little of the risk because of his ignorance of the sort of thing that might happen. At most he imagined Doctor Quoy might force his way in and attack him personally; an

attack he welcomed rather than feared. At the least and this was his inward conviction - he would not be molested at all.

In his ignorance, then, and in his weariness and desire for a change into clean things, he had almost dismissed Doctor Quoy and all his possible machinations from his mind by the time he got to his own door.

Mechanically, his thoughts mainly occupied by Priscilla, he fumbled for his key, opened the outer vestibule door, and started up the stairs to his rooms.

Almost stumbling in his fatigue, he let himself in and switched on the lights. Retaining only enough sense of caution to lock and double-lock the door behind him, he went to the bedroom and began packing his suitcase.

When it was that he first noticed the odor, he could not afterward determine. It was very faint at first, so faint that it probably had begun to seep into the room almost with the moment of his entrance. But he had packed his things and had half undressed for a shower before he threw back his head and sniffed in a startled, puzzled way.

Even then, for a second or two, he wasn't quite sure.

"Funny," he mumbled aloud—that first unconscious recognition of danger when a person talks aloud to bolster up his courage— "funny, I thought I smelled something odd."

His voice died away as suddenly; he *knew* he had smelled something odd! Something he had smelled before!

A strange and ghastly odor of the grave! Of things long dead and clad in mildewed, clotted shrouds, of putrefaction and corruption, of inanimate lumps that rotted in secret places, buried from the light of the sun and the vision of mortal eyes!

Rick froze into immobility. Every nerve in his body seemed to jump and twitch. An icy chill started at the tips of his feet and crept slowly up to his set jaw, till the jaw muscles quivered and strained in ridges that distorted his face.

The stench of death! The visiting card of the vampire—more particularly, of the deadly Doctor Quoy! It was filling the place now till he gasped for breath, till he felt as if he must surely suffocate in the foul atmosphere.

For a long moment Rick stood there, in a room seemingly deserted save for himself, but which he knew was slowly being occupied by another—a dreadful—tenant. Each beat of his heart exaggerated the sensations of his heart exaggerated the sensations of suffocation. His tongue seemed glued to the roof of his mouth. The veins in his neck seemed to

swell and harden till the odd thought assailed him that if they were touched they would snap like dry twigs.

Then Rick moved. He started to leave the room, running toward the hall door. This stench . . . this loathsome signature of Quoy . . . never had he known such panic fear as it induced. Escape was all that was in his mind now!

He had almost got out of the room when the events presaged by the terrible odor began.

The first manifestation was a sudden paralysis, binding him from head to foot until it was only with difficulty that he could roll his eyeballs. Lot's wife, turned to a pillar of salt, could have been no more helpless and rigid.

He had got near enough the bedroom doorway to be able to look through it and see the hall door and the possible escape it represented. Yet he could no more complete that short journey than he could fly.

And now a smothered gasp came from Rick's stiff--a gasp that was intended for a shout.

Something soft and slimy, something boneless and smooth and loathsome, had crawled over his stockinged foot!

He fought against the rigidity that held him, willed his head to tilt downward that he might see what dread thing it was that had crawled across his flesh, to leave its viscous cold trail behind it. His head remained set on his neck, locked immovably on his shoulders. Not even the inch that would have allowed him to see the floor at his feet, could he move it.

Then, while straining eyes tried to roll down enough to vision whatever repulsive mass it was that had touched him, another slimy body trailed its cold length over his instep. And another! And then a fourth! And now his eyeballs, straining downward, caught just a flash of some moving, tapered, yellowish-white thing that might have been the tail of some unbelievably huge, white earthworm.

The stench of the grave grew even more appalling. Rick gagged in the poison of it. Gagged--then gasped for breath again . . .

Something crawling and hairy had started a slow, tortuous, many-legged path down his bare arm!

In the thin air of the doorway before him, a tiny commotion began to be visible to him. The air wavered and shimmered in ragged small columns, much as heat rays shimmer and vibrate above a hot plate in the sun.

The small columns shaped into more definite lines and grew less

shifting in movement. They grew clearer, bolder. White patches etched themselves in behind them. Two narrow, dark slits split the white patches. A blood-red, writhing gash appeared suddenly over a triangle that was now revealed as a long, narrow chin.

Stunned, reeling with horror, Rick found himself gazing at the pallid face of Doctor Quoy.

Bodiless, motionless, it hung there in the doorway, revealed in every detail by the bright electric lights. And Rick stared at it with glazing eyes, his hypnotized gaze going from the blood-red, repulsive lips to the drab, somehow dead-looking hair that sprouted from grayish skin, drawn parchment-tight over a veritable death's-head.

The crimson lips—so terribly suggestive of fresh blood—moved slightly. Words came to Rick's consciousness: "... for daring to interfere... my existence... you shall die..."

"Damn you! Damn you! Get back to whatever Hell it is you come from!"

In a gasping whisper these words came to Rick's ears. He tottered a little. The whisper had seemed to be his. But he had willed the words to be screamed aloud defiantly.

"... shall die..."

The reply tolled out like two notes of a discordant bell. At their conclusion, Rick saw the ghastly head fade slowly into nothingness. Slowly, it reduced itself to the shimmering small columns, like heat waves—so slowly that his eyes continued for seconds to see what was no longer really there, the face disappeared and the doorway was an empty space.

Swaying on his feet, his outraged nervous system almost ready to break down and plunge into oblivion, he suddenly heard a noise in the other room. Around the corner of the door frame, it sounded; it came from something as yet hidden from his sight by the partition.

It was a dry, whispering, rustling *rattle*, that sound. With his mind tottering on the borderline of insanity, Rick tried to define it...

The whispering rattle of scales? Of giant, reptilian scales, moving scratchily with the progress of a mighty, serpentine body? No, not exactly. The rustle of stiff silks? That was more like it, but not the precise sound...

And then the horrible simile came to his mind. And so exactly did it fit that, in the next instant, Rick knew it was no simile—but the hideous truth!

That dry, loathsome sound was the noise of *bones*! Bones loosely articulated, insecurely held together by withered tendons and shreds of

muscle! Bones rubbing dryly against each other, muted only partially by some clinging, muffling fabric!

Hardly had the stunning realization come to him when he saw something grope slowly around the door frame and reach out in his direction.

That something was a hand. But it was not a hand; it was a thing composed of five, jointed bones of different lengths, like a loose-spread bundle of sticks only vaguely resembling fingers, held together by cords, which were frayed and dabbled with brownish-red clots. And on the middle stick, the longest stick, was something that looked like a fingernail, long and jagged, seeming ready to fall off at a touch.

The hand crept farther. And now Rick saw that it was attached to a wrist that was, in patches, only bare bones, and in places was padded with bits of spongy, gruesome substance that might once have been flesh. Over this, as the ghastly arm came more into view, he saw draped a fold of grayish-white fabric to which bits of each still clung.

"Let me die," prayed Rick, "or faint . . . or go mad . . ."

And then the thing itself stepped slowly into the doorway till it was fully revealed, framed by the door-sills like a grisly picture. A picture of death in its final form!

Eyeless sockets glared emptily at Rick. Jaws that were on the verge of falling apart, moved slightly. With a dry, whispering rattle, the thing, clad in fold on fold of rotted shroud, advanced toward him.

And then part of his prayer came true. He fainted.

But just before, with a last gasp of terror, he let go—just before his knees sagged under his weight—one final impression his darkening eyes conveyed to his mind: the awful, shrouded thing was still moving, machine-like, toward him . . . that it was almost near enough to touch him with its clawing talons . . .

VI

BACK AT THE HOSPITAL, Professor Tholl remained in ignorance of Rick's departure for some little time. When the younger man did not come back, he assumed Rick was waiting till the messenger came for orders and the keys to the apartment. Knowing so much better than Rick did the peril that stalked them, he didn't dream that Rick might have been so reckless as to go alone into the night.

Absently, the professor stared at the sleeping girl. Only one bright ray pierced the fog of disaster that hung over her: she would not, if she

failed to win through her awful experience, be condemned to the usual fate of the vampire's victim—that of becoming a vampire herself after her death. Doctor Quoy's vampirism was not a natural one to be transmitted like a foul disease from one person to the next; it was an artificially acquired thing that would die when he died.

Tholl sighed, looked at his watch, and saw that Rick had been gone over half an hour. His heavy eyebrows drew together. He glanced at Priscilla, decided he did not dare leave her even for a few moments to go and see if Rick was downstairs in the lobby, and picked up the telephone.

In a low voice he talked to the girl at the desk, and was told that Rick had gone to his flat himself!

Tholl sprang to his feet. He was in a quandary. Rick, rashly alone in his apartment, might be in deadly danger. But if he went to Rick's side, he must leave the girl alone here. Which needed him most? Over which was the black wing of Quoy's power hovering nearest?

At this instant the breathing of the slumbering girl lost some of its regularity. Her lips parted.

"Rick . . ." she moaned. Her arms moved as though she were struggling to wake. "Rick, dear . . ."

That was all. But it was enough to decide Tholl. All his studies had tended to confirm him in the belief that every dream, of every person, had a meaning. In Priscilla's dream she had called out in accents of fear to Rick. Did that mean that she herself was afraid, or that the young man was in some sort of peril? He believed the latter was true.

He pressed the button for the night nurse. He looked at her thoughtfully. A tall, quiet girl with intelligent dark eyes, she appeared to be the sort of person one could tell things to. Almost, the professor decided to confide in her. Then he changed his mind. Better to test the credulity of no one by naming the actual, bizarre danger that hung over Priscilla Rand!

"I must leave here for an hour or so," he told her at last. "As you know, it is thought necessary to have someone with Miss Rand every moment of the night. You have been told why?"

The nurse shook her head.

"It is because she has a queer horror of bats," said Tholl smoothly; "a delusion, if you want to call it that. Therefore, someone must be with her constantly to reassure her if she wakes in terror. Could you arrange to take my place for, say, an hour and a half?"

The nurse glanced at the watch on her wrist.

"Yes," she said. "I go off duty in five minutes. Then my time will be my own. I'll sit in here till you return."

"Good," said Tholl. "And by the way" — his tone grew casual — "if an actual bat *should* blunder in at the window, or the transom, for heaven's sake drive it out before Miss Rand can wake and see it."

"A bat?" echoed the nurse, staring. "In the heart of the city? Impossible!"

"Impossible, at least," the professor agreed. "I just thought I'd mention it . . ."

The nurse went out to report, while Tholl fretted at each second of delay. In less than the stated five minutes she was back, and Tholl raced down to the lobby and into the street.

His mind outraced his feet. Speed was essential now. His house was nearer than Rick's apartment. And in his house was his laboratory and a miniature stage, a puppet-show arrangement, much similar to the one they had seen on the *escritoire* in Quoy's deserted rooms. With that he could set a guard of projected, multiple Professor Tholls about Rick that would be as effective a protection as his own presence, and a quicker one.

He turned toward his home, then changed his mind in mid-stride and hastened toward Quoy's old rooms. They were nearer yet. And he knew how to use the puppet-stage Quoy had left behind him as well as the doctor himself.

To the deserted apartment of Doctor Quoy he hastened with all possible speed. And ever as he went, he prayed that Quoy had not already struck, that he might not be too late in his projected rescue.

In the professor's specially trained mind, as he let himself in through the outer doors of the building where Quoy had lived, a sort of occult bell of warning sounded a muffled peal. But he paid scant attention to it, engrossed as he was in getting to that small stage at once.

That Quoy might have returned, might be at this moment in the room behind the final locked door where Tholl paused an instant, never occurred to the venerable professor. Although, he confessed honestly later, it certainly should have! Else why should that odd note of warning have sounded dimly in his mind, and a queer, uncanny prickling sensation have momentarily burned all over his body as he opened the door and walked in?

But if he was too preoccupied to know that Doctor Quoy was there before he opened the door, he became aware of it the second after he stepped inside! He was made aware of it by the fact that all the lights in the ostensibly vacant place were turned on, and an instant later by finding himself gazing directly at the tense, bent back of Quoy himself!

Doctor Quoy was seated in front of the *escritoire*. Over his shoulder,

Tholl could see enough to know that the thing which was claiming his attention was the tiny stage. Also the professor could see Quoy's hand move above the contraption, and knew that the man's fingers were manipulating the puppet-strings, now duly attached to whatever tiny figures they had been designed to animate.

What dark purpose was being served by that lonely puppet-show? Tholl silently edged nearer to find out.

Had Doctor Quoy not been so lost in sinister concentration, so certain that his two enemies would never think of looking for him in this place from which surely he might be supposed to have fled forever, it is certain that Tholl could not have got so close to him without his having known of it. As it was, the professor found himself stealing nearer, inch by inch, with his hated antagonist still unaware that anyone was in the room with him. At last he was close enough to see that tiny stage and the tiny figures that were moved jerkily upon it . . .

He saw that the stage was partitioned into two spaces, designating rooms. He saw that one of these little rooms, which occupied the major portion of the stage, was supposed to be a bedroom. Then he stared at the puppets.

One of these, even in miniature, was a blood-curdling thing: a sort of skeleton, done in wax the professor judged, and draped in some rotted white fabric. The other figure—

At the sight of the other figure, Tholl gasped aloud—a horrified exclamation at the sound of which Doctor Quoy instantly dropped his puppets and whirled about with a snarl. But for a second or two, deadly as his danger now was, the professor could not move from the spot, or tear his eyes away from that ominous small figure.

For the puppet, with a skill that was diabolical in its perfection, had been shaped to resemble Rick Ballard! And at the moment Tholl's gasp had warned Quoy, the ghastly little wax skeleton had just touched the throat of Rick's image with its tiny claws of hands!

With another strangled exclamation, the old professor wrenched his eyes from the deadly stage, and glared into the hate-filled eyes of Quoy.

"You thing of the grave!" he grated. "Move away from that death-trap while I smash it!"

The fires in the dark, oblique eyes died down and were replaced by glints of cold mockery.

"The excellent professor forgets," murmured Doctor Quoy, "that I am no longer his underling. I am the master now. There will be no orders given, save those I choose to give myself."

"Will you leave that thing before I kill you?" blazed the professor.

Forgotten were his years. His old shoulders had straightened under their weight; and his keen gray eyes shone with a fire almost of youth.

"How can you kill that which you yourself admit is already without life?" mocked Doctor Quoy.

"If I can't kill it—that walking corpse that clothes your spirit—I can at least hold it till dawn. And with the dawn I can drive a stake through that unclean heart!"

Doctor Quoy's eyes burned like bits of jet in a strong light. Like lighting his narrow long hands began a weird sign.

With a cry of rage, Professor Tholl flung himself at him. Quoy eluded the clutching old hands with a snake-like writhe; but the professor, in his charge, knocked over the puppet-stage on the escritoire. An instant later he had smashed it to matchwood. With the destruction of the eerie tool there was an ear-shattering report, like the roar of a gun.

Doctor Quoy's face was maniacal as he confronted the professor. But before he could begin whatever infernal incantation he was about to hurl at him, there came a peremptory knocking at the door.

The knocking grew louder, changed to heavy blows as someone tried to burst the door in. A voice sounded: "Hello—is somebody in trouble there? I heard a shot."

A second later the door was wrenched from its frame almost enough to spring the lock. And then, just as it gave completely, Quoy flung one swift look of rage at Tholl and disappeared.

Even in that crowded moment, with death only just averted and his aged body trembling leaflike under the terrific strain that had been put upon it, the professor had time for one terrible flash of realization.

Quoy had mastered that last and most terrible of all the black arts, dematerialization. Tholl groaned. With that fearful knowledge what chaos might not Quoy be able to bring down at will upon an ignorant and helpless world!

A man stepped over the smashed ruin of the door—a man who hastened to the professor and put a supporting hand under his arm.

"What's wrong? he asked. "Burglary? Attempted murder? What?"

"Burglary," said Professor Tholl weakly. "I was in here, and someone attacked me from behind. I didn't even have a chance to see the man.

His rescuer, a powerfully built, red-haired fellow, stared suspiciously.

"Yes? And what were *you* doing in here. I live in the apartment next door, and now I come to think of it, this place is supposed to be vacant. I think maybe the police . . ."

He stopped. His mouth opened foolishly; his eyes half closed as though overpowering slumber were descending on him. Which, as a matter of fact, was the case . . .

The professor completed with a few passes of his hands the simple hypnotic process he had started. He eased the man gently down on the floor.

"In five minutes you will awake," he commanded, touching the closed eyelids gently.

Whereupon, he left the room and raced to Rick Ballard's apartment. Behind him a sleeping man breathed heavily—to wake up precisely five minutes later and for the rest of his life to tell a tale that was sometimes heard with interest and sometimes laughed at but never by any chance believed.

VII

RICK BALLARD SLOWLY came back to consciousness. For an instant he lay in a daze, his eyes still closed, unable to recall anything. He had been unconscious for an unguessable length of time . . .

His eyes flew open as memory came to him, and he threw up his arms with a hoarse cry to defend himself from the grisly horror that had been advancing on him.

But the horror was there no longer. In its place was Professor Tholl, bending over him, bathing his forehead with cold water, talking to him in soothing, reassuring tones.

Rick relaxed with a long sigh, content in the realization that he was in some unexplained way safe from further attack. In a short time his fit, muscular body had sprung back to almost a state of normalcy, and he was listening, almost sheepishly, to the professor's account of his trip to Doctor Quoy's rooms and of what he had found there. Then he told his story.

"All I saw was a succession of hypnotic images," marveled Rick. "Yet they certainly seemed real. I felt the cold, slimy things—like snakes they seemed—crawling around my feet. I felt something hairy and spidery crawl down my arm. I thought I saw Doctor Quoy's face—and I was sure I saw that specter from the grave! And now I find they were only mind pictures, instead of the real thing!"

"Don't be so sure they weren't the real thing," said Tholl quietly.

"Real bulk and substance materializing from thin air?" said Rick,

with a little smile. "No, I can't believe that. And it isn't necessary to believe it. The other fits in too logically — the hypnotic images induced in my mind from a distance by Doctor Quoy."

Tholl echoed Rick's first statement. "Thin air? There is no such thing! The apparently empty air about us is as teeming with life as the tropic seas!"

He stretched out his arm and swept it in front of him. "When I do that I have no doubt whatever that I have passed my hand through the substance of some living thing, moving and breathing and solid, but in some other dimension, that is as unconscious of us as we are of it. Doctor Quoy has the power of drawing things from other dimensions into this, or of shifting objects from this to others and back again. Believe me, the things you saw were actually here — not existing only as figments of your imagination."

Rick shook his head. "It makes me out an awful coward, to keel over at the sight of brain-phantoms," he said, "but I'm perfectly certain, now, that I was attacked by nothing more dangerous nor solid!"

Tholl sighed. Then he reached behind him, and brought into view a newspaper, rolled lengthways, as though bundled around some long cylindrical thing.

"Perhaps, then, you'll believe this. One of your visitors, due possibly to sudden death, possibly to the fact that Quoy's invocations were incomplete, didn't return to its own dimension!"

He unwrapped the paper.

Rick gasped as his eyes gazed at the thing the professor had rolled up and hidden from sight on his entrance there. The walls seemed about to fall in on him, while the floor swayed dizzily under his feet. And still his eyes would not close, would not turn away from the one visitor that had not returned to its own world.

A wormlike thing, that was yet longer and bigger than any worm we know. A legless, cylindrical, viscous mass, colored a dirty yellowish-gray, with its soft, pulpy head smashed in as though it had been inadvertently stepped on . . .

As though from a long distance, Rick heard the professor saying apologetically, "I shouldn't have showed it to you. You're not recovered yet from your shock. I am very sorry . . ."

Dusk was falling. The sun's flaming disk was half hidden under the ragged skyline of the city to the west. Rick and the professor were in Priscilla Rand's room at the hospital.

Priscilla, now judged almost well by the hospital staff, although they were still baffled by her mysterious sickness, was sitting up in bed. Her cheeks, which had almost regained all their normal color, were now pallid again; Professor Tholl had decided she was strong enough to stand the shock of knowing precisely what danger threatened her, and was telling her of Doctor Quoy.

There was a hush as he finished. Priscilla gazed out the window at the tip of the dying sun, and watched it sink slowly behind the skyline. Now her wide eyes went back to the venerable, bearded face.

"What are we going to do?" she whispered. Not once had she doubted the truth of Tholl's astounding story. Her woman's instinct told her it was all fact; forbade her a single one of the doubts that had lingered so long in Rick's mind. "This man—this monster—seems all-powerful!"

"Powerful enough," admitted the professor. "But only in the hours of darkness, remember! During the daytime he is in a helpless trance. It is during the daytime we must find him and destroy him. But, during the daytime, my only method of locating him is not effective."

Priscilla gazed quickly, hopefully, at him. "You *have* a method of finding him, then?"

"Yes. A rather terrible method, and one that involves great risk—to you, even more than to Rick and myself."

"To *me*?"

"Yes. I have said my method is not effective during the daylight hours, when Doctor Quoy is in his vampire's trance, because then he gives off no psychic aura of activity for me to work on. But if we try to search for him at night it means that you must be left unguarded!"

"And that," burst out Rick, catching her hand, "is not to be thought of!"

Priscilla stared at the window, which was now a slowly darkening oblong as dusk deepened to night. From the street outside came a shrill shout as a newsboy, disregarding the hospital zone of quiet, cried an extra. The words drifted up to them, only half registering on their preoccupied minds: "Extra! Extra! Girl kidnapped! Police combing the city! kidnapped. . . ."

Priscilla shuddered as the words finally penetrated her full consciousness. Girl kidnapped! And what might be *her* fate if she were left alone during the period of Doctor Quoy's greatest activity!

But none of this misgiving showed in her tone as she said: "There's nothing for it but to leave me unguarded. This creature must be trap-

ped, and if he can only be hunted down at night, then you two dare not waste time by staying inactive in this hospital room!"

"I won't have it—" began Rick.

"Ssh," said Priscilla, squeezing his hand.

"There is an alternative," said Professor Tholl, avoiding her gaze. "I can go out alone, leaving Rick here with you."

Priscilla smiled. There was in that smile the sort of determination that sent women, without a backward glance, rolling in covered wagons into fearsome Indian country with their men a hundred years ago. Her eyes compelled Tholl's to meet them.

"You aren't very young," she said gently. "Yours is the brain and the knowledge, but not the body. You need the muscles of this young husky man to back you up. You must both go."

And so it was finally decided. There was, really, nothing else to do. It was foolish to wait passively for Quoy to come and attack them, illogical to do anything but try to search him out as speedily as possible, taking whatever risks might come up on the way!

They went out, with admiration in their eyes for the quiet courage of Priscilla, and with fear in their hearts for what might happen to her during the long night. And as they went, the final cries of the unseen newsboy came faintly from the distance: "Extra! Big Kidnaping mystery! Girl disappeared . . ."

VIII

THE TWO MEN TURNED toward the professor's gloomy big house. As they went, Tholl's face was grave and troubled, and for a long time he said nothing. Equally silent, Rick walked beside him, uneasily glancing about him now and then into the darkness, thankful for every street-light. The evil powers of Doctor Quoy might at that very instant be hanging over them like a sword of Damocles, ready to drop and snuff out their lives.

"What is this method of yours of finding out where Quoy is operating?" he said at last.

"You'll soon see," was Tholl's somber reply.

"We're on our way to your house now for your equipment or tools, or whatever you call them?"

"Yes," muttered the old professor, "for my tools . . ." Rick glanced at his face. In the uncertain light it had almost a greenish tinge.

"You spoke of risks," he persisted. "What are they—physical, or psychical?"

"That, too, you will soon discover for yourself," said the professor.

No more was said during the balance of the walk. They turned into the drive leading to the huge old house.

It was in pitch darkness. No light showed at any window. The professor had no servants, preferring to live hermitlike in a few of the rooms and let the rest of the house cover itself with dust, rather than have a housekeeper to interfere with his private observations and experiments.

Tholl turned the key and pushed open the door. Rick almost exclaimed aloud with relief when the professor switched on the lights in the old-fashioned, ill-kept hall.

Without pausing, Tholl went down the hallway to the door in the rear that led to the steep basement steps. He turned on another switch, illuminating the cavernous cellar. Rick followed him into its depths. As he went, he felt the now familiar icy shiver of something weird and terrible about to happen, an intuitive warning, having nothing to do with reason.

"I'm becoming positively psychic!" he said aloud, with a twisted grin. He said it more to break the oppressive silence than because he expected an answer. But the professor replied quite seriously:

"Probably you are temporarily endowed with a reflection of my own psychic sensitivity. But please do not talk any more. A hard mental struggle lies before me. I must compose my mind for it."

They traversed the big cellar to the rear wall. Here the professor halted.

Rick, gazing at it, could see no more than that it resembled any other wall, constructed of blank cement blocks which were cracked here and there with the weight of the old house. But the professor's eyes gleamed a little as he bent nearer one of the blocks and touched a ragged crack that split it diagonally from end to end.

Rick stared. The cracked block, and four more above and below it swung aside to form a narrow doorway. Tholl motioned, and Rick followed him through it and into a low tunnel, the roof of which was crudely shored up with timbers.

At Tholl's touch, the secret door slid into place, leaving them in the darkness of the tomb. Rick felt the professor tug at his arm: he walked ahead, paused a moment while, he surmised. Tholl opened another portal; then followed forward a few steps.

They stopped; and, thrusting out his arms on either side, Rick could touch nothing. They were in a fairly large chamber, or cave. He heard

the professor mutter something under his breath. Then there was a click, and light flashed up.

The prosaic electric-light bulb, hanging from a cord in the roof, intensified rather than diminished the horror of that underground place. The harsh, glaring light shone only too clearly on the festooned spider webs, and the slow oozing drops of moisture that appeared from the raw earth of the walls to drip monotonously between the rough supporting timbers. The air of the place was damp, stifling. It was like a crypt.

And then Rick started, while his face went chalk-white. He stared with pounding heart at something stretched out in one corner, something that sprawled in ghastly rigidity on the earth floor.

Like a crypt? The place *was* a crypt in actual fact! There was its corpse!

It was the body of a man of average height. To judge by the condition of the flesh, and the look of the splotched, discolored clothes that covered it, the body had been there a long time. Another thing that hinted that it had lain there for long was the hair on the face and head, curled and rank and unkempt, like foul weeds growing on a grave mound.

The face was covered with dried, reddish-brown splotches. And these were seen to have come from the head, the back and top of which were horribly crushed in.

"My God!" whispered Rick. "Who was this?"

"That is the mortal part of the man I hired in an evil moment to be my assistant, Doctor Herbert Quoy. And that"—the professor's face became set and grim—"is the 'tool' I am about to use in trying to locate Quoy's whereabouts. To that lump of clay is chained the spirit of the man whose body Quoy now wears—a spirit that shall be my helper!"

Rick was speechless. The overpowering closeness of the air in that hidden cave, the subtle warning of dread things about to happen, above all the presence there of that ghastly, pallid figure, filled him with a longing to be through at once and rush back out into the clean, open air.

The professor knelt beside the sprawled body. His hands went slowly out toward the red splotched face. But before they touched it, he gazed up at Rick.

"This is a moment of great danger," he said. "I have never dared try such an experiment as this before, so I do not know exactly what may happen. Whatever it is, be on the alert for it!"

Wordlessly, Rick nodded. The professor began the procedure that was to haunt Rick from then on in nightmare-ridden sleep.

A sentence came sonorously from the professor's lips. Rather, it was

a succession of sounds, no one of which was familiar to Rick, but which in combination sounded like a phrase in some forgotten tongue.

Tholl's long, sensitive fingers lightly touched the lid of the right eye that was sunk deep in the grisly ruin of the face. Then he was silent.

For what seemed to Rick hours, the tableau held: Tholl kneeling motionless beside the corpse, his eyes half closed and his face tense as if he were concentrating all his mental powers on some gigantic task; Rick standing beside him and a bit to the rear, staring at the pallid thing which had once housed a spirit that was now walking abroad, clothed in another's flesh. Then an astounding, an awful thing happened.

The right eyelid, which Tholl had touched lightly, quivered perceptibly. Jerkily, a fraction of an inch at a time, it opened to reveal the sunken, shriveled eyeball beneath. And at sight of that shrunken eye, Rick felt his throat contract till his lungs labored for breath.

The eye was alive!

The body was patently lifeless; the face was a clotted mass obviously verging on actual decomposition. But in that deathly face the eye lived and moved! It rolled in its socket and glared first at Rick and then at Tholl.

An instant later a second miracle took place. The withered lips moved, disclosing jaws from which several teeth had already dropped out. A voice sounded—a voice that was harsh and hoarse, that was dull and hollow, as a voice might be that is heard in a tunnel a long way off.

"I am here. What do you wish?"

Rick was battered by a very insanity of terror at the sound of that sepulchral voice. But with an enormous effort of will he kept from shrieking aloud, and remained motionless by the professor's side.

"I command you," said Tholl in a low, shaken voice, "to direct us to the presence of—*you know who!*"

With the last three words a fearful change took place in the rigid body. The eye fairly flamed. The lips writhed and hissed. The whole figure twitched as if galvanized by an electric charge.

"Where is he?" said Tholl. "I command you to tell."

The loosened, yellowed teeth clashed together. A last spasmodic quiver touched the stark limbs. Then the corpse was still. There was silence—a silence so deep that Rick could hear, like a drumbeat, the thudding of his heart.

"My God," groaned Tholl, "Have I failed?"

He stopped. From the dead lips was coming a hoarse, sepulchral voice.

"The one you seek . . . stone house with red roof . . . beside the cemetery men call Tyn—Tyn—"

"Yes," said the professor. Beads of sweat stood out on his face as he leaned over the corpse and willed it to go on. "Yes," Tyn—what?"

"Be quick . . . or too late . . ." the voice went on, haltingly. "Tyn—Tyn—"

Like the mechanical failure of a clockwork thing that has run down, the hollow voice faltered and stopped.

"Go on!" cried Tholl, his face livid with excitement.

But the lips moved no more. The voice was stilled.

The professor clenched his fists in helpless anguish, but Rick thought he had understood, "Maybe the thing means Tynsdale Hollow Cemetery," he suggested shakily. "Maybe—"

He stopped, appalled; and at the look in his eyes, the professor whirled to gaze at the corpse.

That fearsome object, with a soft snapping of stiffened joints and withered tendons, was getting to its feet. The single opened eye glared with the fires of hell as the body lurched toward the two who had dared to use it, in defiance of the laws of death, for their own mortal purpose.

"The door—" gasped Tholl. "Quick!"

But already the corpse had launched itself stiffly toward them, its gaunt arms flailing like jointed tree branches as it reached the professor.

Fighting down a wave of repulsion that was nauseating in its intensity, Rick sprang to help the old man. He lashed out with his fists, battering at the dead thing.

His fists found nothing solid to injure. His clawing hands sloughed through clammy substance too insecure to grasp. But he managed to send the awkward figure tottering back for a second.

It was enough. He dragged the professor to the entrance, and slammed the wooden barrier just as the awful thing in the cave thudded against it.

Staggering a little, like creatures moving endlessly in a nightmare, they returned the way they had come, leaving behind them a huddled figure bathed only too clearly in the raw glare of the electric bulb . . .

Doctor Quoy's attack has barely started. Don't miss the concluding chapters of this story in our April issue.

For Services Rendered

by Stephen Goldin

STEPHEN GOLDIN gives here the best possible argument for a contention that the weird and fantasy tale is not a played-out thing, dissolved by the acids of materialist attitudes which have driven out the superstitions on which most of the classic weird tales have been built. It is true that various slavic, teutonic, norse, and greek legends have been worked to death, but the world of myth is far, far broader. Here is a different tale.

IT WAS IN SUVA that a man came into the shop. He was conventionally dressed in a conservative suit, but his black skin revealed him as one of the local Melanesian islanders.

"May I help you?" I asked politely.

He seemed unsure of himself. "I, uh, understand that you perform rather special services." It was more a question than anything else. He spoke in a crisp, British English.

"I have been known to help people out of unusual circumstances. What seems to be your problem?"

"It's not me, it's my father. He's about to die."

"I'm afraid there's nothing I can do about that. I never interfere in matters of death."

The man shook his head. "I wasn't going to ask that. But my father is about to die a natural death, which means he'll be prey for Miru's oven. Are you acquainted with Miru?"

"Not personally," I replied, "although I am familiar with her legend."

She's the local hunger demon, is she not, who devours the living souls of those who have died."

"Mostly those who die a natural death," the man amended. "My father is the chief of Kanagea Island. It is customary for the chief to lead us in our wars, but since the British have come our wars have dwindled until today there are no wars. My father is thus cheated of the opportunity to die in battle and attain the house of the brave. He has ruled our people for over seventy years, and he is a proud old man; I don't think he fears the heat of Miru's oven as much as he fears the disgrace it would bring our island that he not dwell in the house of the brave. He is virtually paralyzed, or he would kill himself. He has begged me to kill him, but I have been exposed to civilization too long. Nor can I allow any other of our people to do it."

"You want me to kill him, then?" I interposed.

"No; even then Miru might be able to claim him. I want you to accompany my father's spirit, even to thwart Miru, so that he achieves his place in the house of the brave. Do you think you can do that?"

I thought a moment. I have had enough experience with demons to know that they are not easily thwarted. By the same token, I've managed to learn a few things myself, and knowledge is power. "I can always try," I said. "Dignity is one of the few things a man should be able to carry with him, even in death."

"About your fee—" the other began, but I stopped him.

"In a business like mine," I told him, "it is foolish to discuss payment until after the job is done. You wouldn't be here unless you were prepared to pay anything I asked. I assure you that my fee is always reasonable, though what I ask for may seem to you a bid odd."

"Very well. But we'll have to leave at once," he said. "My father was on the verge of death when I left him, and it is a three hour journey by boat to Kanagea."

"I will just be a moment. I'll have to have some weapons if I am to fight properly." I scanned the shelves and located a vial of the antidote to the *kava* draught Miru was reported to give her victims. And after a moment's consideration, I also took down my flute and tied it, with a special red string, around my waist. "All right," I said at length. "Let's go."

The island of Kanagea is a small one, even for the Fiji group. On the west, a cliff rose five hundred feet above the sea. We approached the

island from this direction, then swung around to the south. I caught sight of swaying palms and lush vegetation beyond a broad, sandy beach. We docked at a small wooden pier, and I was escorted along the path to the hut where the chief lay dying. I gathered many curious stares from the children that we passed, but I have developed an immunity to curious stares over the years and thought nothing of them.

We approached a large, old-fashioned *bure* that stood apart in the center of a clearing. It did not take much intuition to guess that this was the house of the old chief, since most of the natives have given up the old beehive-shaped, thatched homes in favor of the more civilized rectangular dwellings.

We went in. The interior of the *bure* was quite dim, and the musty-sweet odor of death was so pervasive in the air that I nearly choked on it. We had arrived scarcely a moment too soon. The chief's body lay in the center of the floor. The local shaman was half-heartedly speaking his spells and shaking his sticks over the old man's body, but he was clearly fighting in a losing cause. When he saw me, he moved respectfully away from the body and let me kneel beside the chief.

I clipped a hair from the old man's head and a hair from my own, and skillfully twined the two together. "What's that for?" the chief's son asked.

"You might say it gives me your father's spiritual scent," I replied, "in case we should become separated from one another in Avaiki." I took from around my neck the pendant I always wear. It was carved for me in Renaissance style long ago by a sculptor I once performed a service for. The statuette is in the shape of an Angel in Black, with flowing gauze robes and trumpet held high. I affixed the twined hairs to the Angel and put it back around my neck. "This pendant is not to be off my body while I am in the neither world Avaiki with your father. Is that understood?" The son nodded.

I lay down beside the chief and prepared my spirit to leave my body. I closed my eyes and took long, deep breaths. My pulse slowed. The Angel in Black on my chest warmed perceptibly for a moment, giving me sign that the old man's soul had just departed. I quietly muttered the phrases that would separate my body and spirit. There was the familiar wrenching of mind and soul, and I was free.

Where the inside of the hut had been dim before, it now glowed brightly with the white light of the second sphere, and I involuntarily paused, as I always do, to look around me. I was standing naked except for the flute bound to my waist by the red string. I had the vial of *kava*

antidote gripped firmly in my hand. Four blurred figures in the *bure* were the bodies of the son, the shaman, the chief, and myself.

I went outside and saw the spirit of the chief walking off toward the west. I followed after him at a leisurely rate. The path got steeper as we approached the western cliffs, however, and I was forced to quicken my stride to avoid falling behind.

The chief stopped at the top of the cliffs and, as I reached him, I got my first good look at him. In life, he had seemed just a very tired old man about to die. Now I saw him as he really was. He walked straight, his penetrating eyes regally surveying the landscape before him. His demeanor was the quintessence of poise, his carriage that of sedate dignity. I have not often met his like, and I was impressed.

There were other spirits standing there on the cliff with us, and still more arrived after we did. We stood calmly, passionlessly, bathed in the breathtaking hues of the golden sunset. Nobody spoke, nobody moved. The silence about us was complete. Time passed, an indeterminant amount, because Time is a phenomenon with no frame of reference in the second sphere which the spirits inhabit.

Then there was a movement from the rocks at the base of the cliff. I stood at the edge and looked down. Before my eyes, a giant *bua* tree sprang up from the ocean and grew rapidly to the top of the cliff. It shimmered in the sunset with a mystical aura; it had rainbow blossoms of every imaginable hue, dazzling the eyes with their seemingly phosphorescent glow. The limbs were slumber cradles, the twigs eager fingers enticing us to rest among their boughs. From the flowers issued a perfume tempting beyond words, and the scent drew us, like so many butterflies, to the blossoms. I don't know if I could have resisted that fragrance; I didn't try. For this was the tree that was rooted in Avaiki, the realm of the demon Miru; this tree was her lure for snagging the spirits of the Fijians. To deal with Miru, I had first to find her.

The far-reaching branches of the *bua* tree soon covered with spirits. The tree shuddered, and we started to descend, slowly at first, then more rapidly until our descent was more a dizzy fall. Arms and legs pawed frantically at the air all about me in futile attempts to halt our now giddy plunge. The former brightness around us faded, but did not extinguish entirely. The heat became more noticeable, and increased until it was almost unbearable. Yet, even still there was no sound.

We hit water. This was not the Pacific Ocean, for the water was fresh and hot. According to legend, we had fallen into an Avaiki lake, its heat being generated from the fires of Miru's oven. The water closed over my

head as my terrific momentum carried me down through the boiling liquid. Just as I thought my lungs would burst, my fall ended and I swam frantically back to the surface.

I had time for only a short breath, as my legs were yanked from under me by strands of twisted fibers. I, and all the other spirits, had been caught in the net of Akaanga, the slave of the fearful Miru, and from here there was supposedly no escape. At this realization, a woeful wail arose from the multitude of ghosts. The wail started low, raised in pitch, and then sank again like a chorus of ailing sirens. I gritted my teeth to shut the sound from my ears, for nothing is half so painful to hear as the moaning of spirits in torment.

But the moaning stopped abruptly as our captor, Akaanga, grasped the net firmly and began swilling it through the water. I submerged, surfaced, and was ducked again before I could even think. I choked and coughed as the scalding water entered my mouth and nostrils. Panic arose in the spirits around me. They clawed at the net, at their neighbors, at anything around them in their animal urge to escape, but to no avail. I fought the panic within myself, and tried to conserve my energy for the ordeal that was to follow. I clutched my vial tightly in one hand, held my flute to my side with the other. The water swirled over and around me, buffeted me from side to side, and I at last lost consciousness.

I was lying face down in sand so hot it burnt into my flesh. I still clutched the vial in my fist, and the flute was at my waist. A hot breeze whipped itself across my bare back. I opened my eyes and allowed the dull red glow of the Avaiki neither world to enter.

A lean foot kicked at my ribs and a scrawny hand yanked me to my feet. The air scalded my lungs as I took my first deep breath in an eternity. One of Miru's attendants stood beside me. He was nearly eight feet tall and scrawny as a stick of wood. He seemed a nightmare version of a child's stick-man drawing. His skin was a vivid orange. His face was extremely thin, and his chin came to a sharp point.

I was pushed into a line with the other spirits, who were again bemoaning their fate in a low sob. I could sense that the spirit of the chief was somewhere in the line behind me, but I did not bother to turn to look for him. The line had started to move ahead of me. I took this opportunity to swallow half the contents of the vial, saving the other half for the chief. Then I moved on as we were escorted into the presence of Miru herself.

Miru was fat, doubtless the only one in Avaiki with such a distinction. She was nearly thirty feet in height, and not an inch of beauty anywhere.

Her skin was mottled with alternate light and dark splotches; her hair fell haphazardly to her waist in ugly nonarrangement; her face was bloated and warty, her cheeks aglow with the everpresent heat of her oven. It was this latter feature that had caused the islanders to sing of her as "Miru-the-ruddy."

I turned my head to absorb other details. The ground all about was cluttered with untold millions of human bones, all sizes, all shapes, and all were picked completely clean of meat. Akaanga, the fisherman-slave of Avaiki, stood behind his mistress. He was nearly as tall as she, but had that "lean and hungry look" that Mr. Shakespeare so immortalized. On Miru's left sat her four daughters. These were more of human size and shape than their mother, being but six feet tall. They were all exceedingly lovely. A hundred yards away, I could see the famed oven. It was roughly a large dome of iron with an open door, through which could be seen red tongues flaring briskly.

A sudden movement caught my eye back on the right. A tall, sleek form was gracefully dancing its way to Miru's side. This, I decided, must be the demoness' son. He was about the same size as his sisters but, whereas they were clad in nondescript clothes, his garments contained a fantastic assortment of hues and colors. As he whirled in his exquisite ballet, green, red, yellow, violet, and orange whisked themselves across his body in a nearly hypnotic display. I watched with fascination his entrance, each move rhythmically choreographed and stylishly executed. My hand moved to my waist and patted the flute as he came to a stop before his mother.

Miru spoke to her son. Her voice was a booming bass. "Which one do you like?" she asked him.

Before he could answer, I stepped forward and bowed gravely. I have always been an exponent of direct action. There is usually little point in trying to bargain with hunger demons such as Miru, as their appetites are constant and their desires inflexible; nevertheless, a straightforward agreement would save everyone a lot of trouble, and failure to get one would do no harm. "O mighty Miru," I said humbly, "I come before you to beg a minor favor on behalf of the people of the island of Kanagea."

She looked at me with surprise and scorn. "How dare you address yourself to me?"

I ignored her remark and continued. "The chief of the island of Kanagea is a noble chief. He has led his people wisely and well for many years. His only misfortune was in being unable to die a warrior's death.

in battle. I ask that you relinquish your claim to him, that he may take his rightful place in the house of the brave."

"Which one is the chief of Kanagea?" Miru asked, surveying the line of spirits.

The chief stepped forward proudly, and I walked over to him. While my back was still turned to Miru, I slipped the vial into his hand and made a slight drinking motion with my hand to my mouth. The chief looked at the bottle and smiled understanding. I turned back to Miru.

Miru's son spoke up. "Mother, that is the one I want—the chief. He is one of the best-looking ones I've seen."

"That's no fair!" one of the daughters protested to Miru. "You always let brother have the pick of the lot."

"Silence!" roared Miru, then turned back to me. "What could you offer in exchange for this favor?"

This was my weak point. In former times, I might have offered her the spirits of several dozen of the chief's slaves—but there are no slaves in Fiji now. I had no spirits at my disposal with which I could bargain.

"I would return to the people of Kanagea," I said, "and direct them to build for you a huge temple adorned with gold, with an altar that contains an eternal flame—"

"What need have I for temples and altars?" Miru asked haughtily. "I need food to subsist."

"There is great honor in a temple," I pointed out.

"Honor never filled a belly, Insolent One. Now step back and let this ritual proceed." She turned to her son. "You shall have the one you request."

The boy spun on his toes and pirouetted gracefully into the air in sign of grateful acknowledgment.

I moved back in line next to the chief. He had taken the opportunity, while I was talking to Miru, to drink the rest of the potion in the vial. I pointed to my chest in a gesture meaning that he should follow my lead. Again he nodded with comprehension.

The first soul in line was brought by two of the attendants before Miru. One of the demoness's daughters held out to it one of the human skulls that Miru uses as drinking cups. It was filled with a dark draught made from the kava root. The spirit took it reluctantly and drank its contents. Within seconds, he fell into a deep, sleep-like trance. The skull slipped from his hands and smashed on the ground, and he collapsed into the arms of one of the attendants, who hoisted him on his shoulders and carried him off toward the oven to be cooked. It seems to me that

Miru's giving her victims an anesthetic before they go to the flames is at least more humane than some practices followed in slaughterhouses in the mortal world.

One by one, the spirits repeated this procedure, until it came my turn to drink Miru's brew. I stepped forward boldly, accepted the cup, and drank without hesitation. The draught was warm in my mouth, and the bittersweet taste it left on the tongue was not altogether unpleasant. Having taken the antidote beforehand, I was not affected by the drink's powers, but I pretended to fall faint as the others had before me.

An attendant lifted me on his skinny shoulder and started carrying me to the oven. With each step he took, the heat seemed to increase a hundredfold. I braced myself against the heat and waited until he was almost to the oven, out of the direct range of Miru's own powers. Then, with one quick motion, I brought my hands up to his throat and broke his neck. He fell silently to the ground, a foul-smelling green liquid oozing from his mouth, and I scrambled to my feet not ten feet away from the door to Miru's notorious oven.

I picked up one of the numerous bones that lay scattered about and ran over to the servant carrying the Kanagea chieftain. He screamed with fear as I raised the bone to bring down upon his head. The sound still rings in my ears. The attendant crumpled from my blow, and the chief got up and stood beside me. Together we awaited the onslaught of Miru's dreadful forces.

Nor were they long in coming. Upon hearing her servant's dying scream, she looked up, purpled with rage. "Seize them!" she commanded her legion. "Throw them into the oven and let them roast forever!"

Her followers rushed to obey. Swarms of the tall, thin stick-men seemed to appear from nowhere, and bore down upon us with a fiendish fervor. I grabbed the body of one of the already-dead servants, whirled him three times around my head and flung him at the mass of our attackers. Seven were knocked down, the rest kept coming.

The chief and I stood back-to-back, each with a bone in our hands, swinging them at our foes as though they were clubs. We seemed to stand there for ages fighting Miru's awful army. With every swing I took, a stick-man fell; yet, such was their number that they continued to assail us, pushing their dead compatriots out of the way and scrambling over one another in their attempts to reach us. As they attacked, they emitted horrendous war cries, calculated to drive nearly any man from his sanity; but the chief and I were doing some pretty fierce screaming of our own which seemed to lessen the demons' din.

The bone I was using splintered and broke after some time, but I

had no chance to pick up a new one. I kicked one attacker in the stomach and he went flying into two of his fellows. I delivered one a karate blow in the side; he snapped like a dry twig. I tore the eyes out of another.

And suddenly, the area before me seemed miraculously clear of attackers. Miru stood on her throne, trembling with fury at the defeat of her army. "Akaanga!" she screamed to her huge slave.

The big fisherman moved ponderously forward. I left the chief to deal with the few remaining stick-men — fighting Akaanga was properly my concern.

I threw a large skull at the giant to ensure his attacking me rather than the chief, then raced to the shore of the lake we had fallen into when we first arrived in Avaiki. Akaanga's net was laid out to dry on the hot sand. I grabbed the edge of the net and tried to lift it, but it was impossibly heavy. Akaanga was drawing closer.

There is a spell I know to give one fantastic strength. It has serious consequences for the user if invoked too often and the strength it gives lasts but a second, but this was a moment to use it. I recited the three lines calmly and felt power surge through my body. I threw the net over Akaanga and pulled down hard. The slave, tangled and confused, tumbled into the lake. I jumped in after him.

The giant was struggling frantically to lift his head out of the water, but the heavy net hindered him. The magical strength had left me by the time I reached him, but I grabbed the net tightly around his neck and pulled with all the normal strength I had. He thrashed wildly, flailing his arms in a mad desire to rid himself of the net and me. After a few moments, the thrashing subsided. I paused for an instant to inhale some of the burning air of Avaiki, then swam back to the shore.

Miru was in a frenzy. Both her army and her giant slave had been beaten, yet even now she was not prepared to yield to me. I decided to play my final card.

I climbed up on top of the oven. The fiery hot metal seared into my flesh like a million torches as I climbed the sides, yet I went on. When I reached the top, I stood with my feet firmly apart on the burning metal and faced the mistress of the invisible world.

"Miru!" I shouted in commanding tones, pointing a warning finger straight at her face. "Hear me, Demon of Avaiki! Unless you immediately grant the chief of Kanagea and myself free passage to the house of the brave. I shall draw your only son into the flaming death of your own oven."

Miru was visibly shocked, half by my impudence, half by my threat. "You dare not," she snarled back. "You cannot."

My only response was a smile as I took the flute from my waist and put it to my mouth. At my very first note, the boy's ears pricked attentively. The tune I played was high and gay, the notes bright and seductive to one who loved to dance as much as Miru's son. The colors of his clothes whirled like a kaleidoscope as the boy began dancing to my tune—hesitantly at first, then with more speed as the song surrounded him, bombarded him, compelled him to join in its mad, gay rhythm. Now he was a rainbow weaving to my music. He seemed to take his life from the melody, bending low when the music lulled, leaping ecstatically when the song went high. He swayed as the rhythm seemed to wind around him and control his movements. As I played, he flickered and danced like a candle flame in a slight draft. And each moment drew him irresistably closer to the oven atop which I was standing.

Miru watched, frightened. At first she was silent, then begged him to come back to her, and finally commanded his return. It was all in vain. He was deaf to all but my melody. The heated air carried the tune to his ears, the ground conveyed the rhythm to his feet. He danced closer to the flames.

"Stop that playing at once," Miru raged at me. I continued my tune. The boy was now a mere five feet from the oven door. I quickened the pace.

The words came hard to Miru's tongue. "You win," she said at last, her voice a near-whisper. "You and the chief may have safe passage to the house of the brave."

I stopped playing and bowed low to her. "You are most gracious, noble Miru," I said gently.

"Leave," she said to me as her son ran back to her, crying "The stairway you seek is behind my throne. Leave me to mend my wounds."

The chief and I silently ascended the golden staircase, and at length came to the house of the brave. There we perceived many warriors gathered around in a circle, performing their eternal war-dance. "My job is over now," I told him.

He looked at me with grateful eyes. "My people thank you."

I nodded and turned to go. "You may stay if you wish," he called to me. "One such as yourself who has vanquished Miru's forces deserves a place honored among the honored."

"Thank you, but I cannot," I said softly. "There are for me sights yet unseen and duties yet undone back in the mortal world." I refrained

from mentioning, also, that performing in an endless war-dance is not my own concept of a pleasant way to spend eternity.

I made my way leisurely back to my own body. The reunion of spirit and body was accomplished with the same feeling of loss of freedom I always feel upon my returns from the second sphere. I sat up.

The chief's son gasped. "You startled me," he said. "It's been five hours since you and my father . . . left. Did everything work out all right?"

"I wouldn't be here if it hadn't. Now, as for my fee, I would like to have your father's skull. I assure you that your father has safely attained the house of the brave, and can no longer be affected by what happens to his mortal remains." The son looked at me quizzically, but gave me what I requested.

I estimate that the powder ground from the skull of one who has evaded a hunger demon such as Miru should prove an excellent famine cure, should I ever need one.

The Reckoning

There was virtually no contest for first place in our July issue. Although each and every ballot did not put the conclusion of the serial in first place, the *outstanding* votes more than compensated for those which placed Jules de Grandin lower, so that there was, in effect, little contest. The serial went into first place from the first four ballots, and was never so much as tied.

There *was* a contest for second place, as Arlton Eadie's story shifted back and forth with Dr. Keller's *Raymond the Golden*. The fourth place story contested with the third place tale a little, but not much.

Here is how the contents of our July issue finally came out. (1) *The Devil's Bride* (part three), by Seabury Quinn; (2) *Raymond the Golden*, by David H. Keller, M.D.; (3) *The Nameless Mummy*, by Arlton Eadie; (4) *The Phantom Drug*, by A.W. Kapfer; (5) *The Rope*, by Robert Greth; (6) *A Revolt of the Gods*, by Ambrose Bierce.

I might add that *The Devil's Bride* eventually proved to have been the most popular serial that Farnsworth Wright ever published in *WEIRD TALES*; your comments and votes have confirmed this original estimate, some 26 years later. There were some who did not like it, then or now, but overall it comes out the most popular story we have printed yet.

The Roc Raid

by George B. Tuttle

GEORGE B. TUTTLE is one of many authors who appeared once in *WEIRD TALES* with a memorable story and that is all we know about him. *The Roc Raid* seems far too well written and thought out to be a first attempt, and one would certainly think that even if it were, such a writer must have had other good stories in him. But, alas, we can tell you nothing else.

IT SEEMS STRANGE, NOW, that the first newspaper report of the stupendous menace received so little space, and was so frivolously treated:

Pierre, S. D., Oct. 29, 1929. (Special.) An enormous bird swooped from the sky to the farm of James French, in Clinton Township, twenty miles from here, yesterday. He picked up an ox in his talons, and flew away with it.

Local scientists think that it was a plesiosaurus (sic) that has somehow survived from prehistoric times.

(Editorial note. The "local scientists" have probably confused "plesiosaurus" with "pterodactyl." The former was a large water reptile with a long neck. The latter was the ancestor of birds and the first vertebrate to fly. Of course it was really a large eagle, which flew away with a lamb.)

The great Chicago paper that printed the item above was somewhat sarcastic about the flying monster, but was very careful, just the same, to put the story on the front page. Its news judgment was vindicated, and its scientific comments riddled when similar stories appeared in the evening papers.

Various points in the Dakotas, Iowa, Minnesota and Illinois reported visitations of the same kind. Near Davenport, Iowa, a man was snatched up in the fields; another in Rochester, Minnesota. Two stories of cattle being carried away came from other correspondents. The star happening, however, was at Cairo, Illinois, where old John, the famous Ringling Circus elephant, was taken while the parade was forming.

This attack was in the presence of thousands, who were able to give a fairly coherent description of the event. A bird, much like an eagle, but of a wing-spread variously described as from two hundred to five hundred feet, swooped from the air, "just like any hawk," fastened his claws into old John, and flew away with him without an effort. A faint trumpet was the last heard of the elephant.

The press agent of the show furnished a possible clue. "Of course I don't know where it came from, nor the genus and species, but in Lane's *Arabian Nights* there is an old line drawing of a roc carrying off an elephant. When this bird came down, and took off old John, it was like a reproduction of this picture."

It was very plain that the rocs, as the public at once named the flying raiders, were to be a problem to the West, and possibly to the whole country. They were ferocious and too powerful to resist except by heavy firearms. A bird that could pick up the largest land animal in its claws and fly away with him could only be dealt with by military methods.

And no ordinary methods, either. Anti-aircraft guns? Millions would be needed to protect the menaced territory. Their doubtful success in the Great War did not inspire much confidence.

Fire to fight fire; planes were what were needed: many to be ready on the ground to go in chase at the first word of the rocs' appearances; others to make a systematic search for their resting-place. They obviously could not stay on the wing all the time. Somewhere there must be an eyrie—a giants' eyrie.

Naturally the discussion of their whereabouts raised the question: "Where did they come from before they started raiding?" There were the many wild theories usual in a mystery. The Sahara, Mongolia, Papua, the North Pole were suggested. One enterprising newspaper editor had the idea that they might have come out of "Symmes Hole," told of

by an American many years ago as an opening at the North Pole to the hollow interior of Earth, and said to be a pleasant place of habitation. He asked Dr. Cook in his prison cell at Leavenworth if he had seen "Symmes' Hole" when he was north. That worthy, however, was through. His answer was that he wanted to see nothing but the outer air, and had nothing to say about the Pole.

"A dark planet near the Perseus meteors," was the suggestion of an amateur astronomer. "In August we passed through that cloud of meteors. They are thought to be part of a broken-up comet and appear annually. It is very possible that there is a larger mass, forming a small planet, near or among them. On this planet dwell these, let us call them, rocs. *This* year it may have come so near Earth as to mingle the two atmospheres. A number of the rocs, inhabitants of the planet, accidentally stayed with us. We know that other worlds contain stones and gases similar to those comprising Earth. The spectrum teaches us that. And the meteors that fall are from outside our sphere, but are of familiar minerals. What more possible than that the atmosphere of this dark planet is similar to that of our own, and that these birds, much like some here, but larger, have developed? If the air is similar, they could live here."

This explanation was generally accepted.

I, Henry Latham, began to figure in the conflict from the very beginning. I was a reserve officer in the United States army. During service in France I had flown an observation plane. My work had been very successful because of an inborn taste for angles and geometrical planes, which I had developed by much study. Neither promotion nor fame had come to me. Making photographs of enemy areas is a useful part of war, but does not bring one to the knowledge of one's superiors. I was no ace, in fact never brought down an enemy plane. A couple that interfered with my work did. it is true, come down of themselves, but no one paid any attention to that.

I was in the air service of the reserves and at once began to make myself useful in what was recognized as an emergency.

For the rocs were busy. They raided everywhere, taking cattle; men, horses. No one could discover where they came from or whither they went.

Efforts were soon begun to combat the invaders, but with little success. Every available army, navy and mail plane was mobilized, armed with machine-guns and bombs, and sent to the Middle West. I assisted in

mapping out their disposition, and my work attracted favorable attention from the war department. I was promoted to major, and put in charge of seeing that the machines were regularly and evenly distributed.

"Put them so that they will be at exact distances apart," I was told. This did not seem to me to be the proper disposition for what was really a military problem. An army is not distributed in that way, but is massed. It was not the time to criticize, however, but to obey orders.

Results were quick. Smithtown, Michigan, was the scene of the first clash between a most highly developed instrument and a living creature far surpassing any of the so-called "brutes" with which we are familiar. For it was apparent in a flash that we were dealing not only with size and strength, but brains. Alfred S. Fowler, a competent, trained aviator, as it happened, a soldier in full air training, took off against a roc that he saw hovering; confident in his machine-gun. In doing so, he showed that man has not quite mastered the technique of the air. No bird would have risen right under another one that might attack him. He would have known that his enemy would swoop.

The roc did swoop, before the plane was far off the ground, and Fowler never had a chance. The manner of the dip showed the intelligence of the invader. He did not grasp the machine in his claws, as a clumsy eagle greatly enlarged, but with an eagle's feeble brain, would have done. That, he seemed to know, would tangle him in a mass of wires and metal. Instead, he hit the side of the machine a tremendous blow with his talons. An airplane's equilibrium is not very great, and it went spinning in the air, over and over, until it crashed, with the aviator inside.

Then a curious thing happened. The bird hovered over the wreck, looking it over very critically, and finally alighted and gave it a thorough inspection. It smelt it, eyed it carefully, and made gingerly little pulls at it with beak and claws, as a cat does at something of which it is not sure.

Fowler, quick-brained, tried to outguess the bird by keeping still. It was to no avail. A great claw fished into the fuselage after him, caught him, luckily, by the strap of his parachute, and fished him out.

Let him tell his own story, as related after his rescue:

2

"I NATURALLY EXPECTED DEATH, but the roc evidently had another aim than breakfast. He eased me out as carefully as a

friend would have done. It is a twisting job to get out of a plane by yourself, but he dropped and turned me at just the right times. I did not hit a wire with my body, and was just easily scraped against the side of the fuselage. Not hurt a bit. Then he picked up the plane in his beak, and flew off. It was wonderful to see the extreme care with which he manuevered to get himself in flight without hurting me. His claw was so large that the parachute strap was caught only by the very end. (They were afterward found to be eighteen inches through at the thickest point.) He lifted the foot that held me, and hopped along on the other one to get in the air. The whirring wings beat the air like a cyclone, and the wind from them felt like one. After a little time he got up, and then flew easily. He was so big that the plane in his beak did not hamper him at all. As for me, well, my weight was nothing, to him.

"Caught as I was only by the parachute strap, as soon as I was in the air I began to have great hopes of escape. It was getting dark, and if I could drop, the roc would lose sight of me. By the developments of modern science, it queerly happened that the height at which I was flying in the air, which would formerly have made my sole temporary salvation the attachment to my captor, would give me an opportunity for an easy escape. I had a good parachute on my back, and had dropped in one at least a hundred times. The risk was slight.

"I began to think of my report to my offices. 'Think!' That was it! As soon as I began to make my plan, the bird seemed to know something was going on in my mind. My plan, of course, was to cut the strap that held the parachute to the claw. Parachute and I would drop, and I would make my landing.

"Just as I reached up with my knife to cut the strap there was an uneasy quiver in the great claw that held me. It reached up, the other claw curled, and I was snugly deposited, parachute and all, in the clutch of that other talon. This time the bird had divined that the strap of the parachute was not a part of my body, and was taking no chances. I was firmly held, but not hurt.

"'These birds are mind-readers,' I said to myself, and it was not slang, either. In sober earnest I conceived the idea that their brains worked in tune with the thoughts of each other, and, more imperfectly, with those of other beings in their neighborhood, in whose affairs they were interested. Their unity of action showed that they have plans for carrying out what they start, and their adaption to unforeseen events makes it clear that they can simultaneously change those plans to meet new cir-

cumstances. Communication by cries would be too crude for their wonderful maneuvers, and besides, cries have not been heard.

"The delicate, ethereal force that we call mind, which we suppose, but are not sure, is worked by the brain, must be, for them, in tune with other minds; not blunderingly, unconsciously, after the manner of the mind-reading of human beings, but in a conscious, highly developed manner, as an effort of the will. These birds are beings, dependent on themselves. They have no weapons, except the terrible ones of nature. They carry no wireless apparatus of any kind. The human race is in for it. It is mind against matter. They have the minds, we the matter, by our technical skill, developed in the last century and a half.

"We were flying along at great speed. I am a skilled aeronaut, used to estimating distances up to two hundred miles an hour. The rate was higher than that (afterward calculated at about four hundred miles). Luckily I had on my flying-suit, and the roc, being of the order of eagles, pulled his comparatively short legs close up to his body, instead of dropping them like a wader.

"I was thus protected from the cold breeze that blew direct from the Arctic. 'Shall we be in the Arctic soon?' I began to think. 'Or at the Pole?' I have read of Symmes' Hole, supposed by an American writer of that name to be located there, where latitude ends. He fancied it as a depression reaching down to the center of Earth, large enough for a continent, and with a warm climate. Since his time Peary and the Noble and Wilkins expeditions have gone over the Pole and reported it not different from other Arctic regions. So I dismissed the Pole from my calculations. I was soon to find that Symmes had a glimmering of the truth. Locality and surface were different, but the open interior existed.

"There is a 'blind spot' between Point Barrow and Spitzbergen. It had never been explored before the roc raid. That, I guessed as we neared the ground, and confirmed afterward, was our destination. It had very evidently been the theater of cataclysmic Earth changes within a short time. The world's seismographs had been recording great earthquakes 'somewhere,' but cables and mails had not shown where. The 'blind spot' was the place. It had been a region of geysers, hot springs and volcanoes, like the Canadian Rockies, but on a great scale. The earthquakes had made the whole area the world's greatest 'fault.' For many miles the surface had fallen in and disclosed the world beneath. This was where the rocks had lived, bred and developed for countless ages.

"We flew into the great depression, with raw earth showing at the sides, where the cave-in occurred, and were in the bird's own world. We swung in under the opening and had a new sky above us. Hardly a sky, as it was only the rock roof of this inner world. In places the depths were unfathomable to the eye. I realized that to birds with wings such an uneven floor was a matter of small importance. Man progresses easily only on a fairly level surface. Levels mean little to a bird. He hardly notices them, surmounting them by the gift of wings.

There was plenty of light through the holes in the roof, or sky. They were of all sizes, from three feet to fifty across, and were the vent-holes of drained geysers and extinct volcanoes. The surface was only a few miles thick, I thought. At intervals solid masses of rock rose from the floor to the sky and were, I thought, vent-holes for living volcanoes and geysers. They probably furnished warmth. At any rate the air, although we were far north, was pleasant.

"As we flew along we were joined by flocks of rocs of many sizes. Some of them had evidently just learned to fly. I had that uncomfortable feeling of examination of my thoughts, not a thought transference—for I received merely a consciousness of communion—but rather an examination. They were probably puzzled, too. As the slang saying goes, 'We did not speak the same language.' That is, our ideas did not run on similar lines, and they must have had to interpret mine somewhat as one would read a cipher.

"It flashed over me that they could not give me much of a physical 'third degree.' They were too strong and I too weak. The slightest violence would kill me. Anyway, there was very little that they could learn from me. I, and my kind, worked with tools of various kinds, and we used our brains to direct and perfect our mechanical efforts. They do everything for themselves, and very little it is, with the wonderful bodies nature has given them. Their minds are superdeveloped because they have for millenniums been in this sheltered spot, with plenty of animal food available, and no forces of nature to fight, and nothing living that could cope with them.

"All around me on the ground were harmless grass and foliage eating beasts, mostly of the antediluvian type. There were mammoths, not so hairy in this pleasant climate as those dug out of the Arctic tundras, stags like the giant elk from Irish bogs, mastodons, with two pairs of tusks, one pointed up and the other down, ox-like creatures that were probably aurochs, and others whose reconstructed pictures or forms I had never seen in books or museums. 'An easy living they have,' I

thought, and simultaneously was aware that they had in a general way divined what was in my mind.

"We alighted on a level spot and my captor unclutched his claw and let me roll out on the ground. I was unhurt, and being used to desperate situations in my war experience, unflustered, but realized my predicament. Not only was I doomed to death but before that I was going to undergo an inquisition of the brain. The death would be quick, and not so much to fear, but the search of mind might disclose something that would betray the human race, of which I was a member, and lead to its destruction.

"It occurred to me that the birds' minds could only read a thinking brain. Like a criminal who baffles his interrogators by not talking I was resolved not to think. Deception was impossible. They could detect it. I must keep my mind blank as I could.

"Then ensued a scene to which only the pencil of a Dore could do justice. I sat, a mite among the towering rocs, their gaze and brains concentrated on my small self. In spite of all I could do, some thoughts chased through my mind; I was unable to keep it off the general subject of the war of air and earth and gave vent to my curiosity.

"It was easy to divine how the rocs had developed as they had. Above had been the small openings in the vault of the earth's crust. They admitted light and air, but were too small for such enormous bodies to go through. The birds had never made use of tools, and so had not enlarged the holes for exit. The recent earthquake had freed them from the underground world, and curiosity led them to fly out above ground. Men, oxen, horses, and the circus elephant had been a tempting change of food to these carnivores, and they had feasted on them.

"The light put up by men, the smallest of their victims, had alarmed their keen brains, and made them resolve to see how the machinery went. My capture and that of the plane had been the result. They were sizing us up.

"The silent inquisition continued some time, I hoped without result. Just how much they had learned from me I could not tell. My idea that they could communicate only with a working brain was only a guess, born of hope. It was very plain that their minds were much more highly developed than those of a human being, and very possibly they could explore the inmost thoughts of one so inferior in intellect.

"The seance was interrupted by several explosions. The daring Latham (he who has worked so much by formulae would resent the epi-

thet) had flown into the opening, seen the gathering of enemies of his race, and dropped some bombs on the throng, intent upon their examination of me. Several had been killed and injured, and there was much confusion. He guessed that I might be there, swooped over where the center of the throng had been, spied me, threw me a rope, and we were off. That is about all that I know of the rocs, and it is enough."

3

HERE LET ME, Henry Latham, take up the story again:

When I heard that Fowler had disappeared the thought at once struck me, "Has he not been captured alive? These birds are intelligent. They want one of us for critical examination just as much as we want one of them. He has been taken to wherever they live. And I think I know where that is."

Keen Canadian ex-soldiers, trained in the late war to observe and remember, had seen these birds high in air. First one man, then another. They all reported them flying north, but no one had seen them in the very far north. The inference, to my mind, was that they came from somewhere in the "blind spot." I followed there on a hunch, and saw the great new raw hole in the ground. Then I saw the inner world of our world, and the rocs, and was sure that I had their lair. Whether it would do me any good or not I could not tell. Getting in was easy enough, but getting out would be another story. Somehow I escaped observation as I sped along, keeping as much in the shadows of the rock roof as possible. Below was a scene that was indeed of another world. The rocs were about their domestic concerns. Several were sitting on their eggs, just like hens. One rose from them in my vision, and disclosed the cream-colored globes, which seemed to be about ten feet through. Another had her brood of six chicks, and had torn some animal to pieces for their food. There were no crops, in fact no sign of manual activity, which seemed strange for such intelligent beings. I have come to the same conclusion as Fowler, that they have developed their minds instead of their ability to do things. Absence of competition has obviated the necessity of mechanical inventions. Men have always had to fight; these rocs never. But, like the most prosperous of men, when the reason for fighting came they were formidable opponents.

Soon I saw the gathering that I afterward found was giving a mind-catechism to Fowler. There was no seeing him, it may well be imagined,

but my business was to find out what I could, and do all the damage possible. It was a fine chance for my bombs, and I threw them. When, as he told, I picked him up, we made up our minds that we had done a day's work, and I circled and set out for the entrance. The birds, few of whom had been killed or injured, followed in a great flock. My plane could make two hundred miles an hour, but they had the wings of us. The entrance was only a few miles away, and we made it before they caught up. The short November day was coming to an end, and in darkness we could escape them—if we could only keep away until darkness. It was now I began to realize how keen were the brains and how perfect the thought co-ordination of my opponents. Without having talked to Fowler I came to the same independent conclusion, that they could read each others' minds, not merely instantaneously, but by developing the thought together; and ours more slowly, but surely so far as what we were considering came within the reach of their knowledge.

When we got out in the upper world they began to use tactics. They separated into four bodies in front, diamond shape, tailing out in the rear into diamonds of the same four, but each fewer in number and closer together. It was a funnel that would close over my plane and envelop it—the air variety of the wild goose formation used by German "No Man's Land" raiders. They wanted to capture us alive, and hold us for examination, like a police magistrate.

It looked as though they would be able to do it. They knew just what was in my mind at every turn I made, and were fast closing in. Luckily, the night also closing in, I had only half of Wellington's wish at Waterloo, that night might come. There was no Blucher for me, as in the great captain's prayer that "night or Blucher would come."

They almost had me as the dusk settled, and then I played my last card. Those great minds could divine my intentions, but could not act on them unless they understood what they meant. A turn, a tailspin, a dive, were within their ken, and they followed them perfectly, but knowledge of geometrical planes, not the flying kind, but the intangible variety of two dimensions, length and breadth, was my specialty. I had worked out formulae for shifting an airplane from one geometrical plane to another in a way that, as I have before said, had brought discomfiture on several German aeronauts that had attempted to follow my gyrations. As a flyer by the usual rules I was mediocre but when I used my own methods, worked out in many sheets of x , y , etc., I could puzzle the best of them. A roc might learn those methods, but could not divine them. As my last hope I began my ritual, counting, and working my controls

in unison. As I had guessed, it was too much even for these opponents. Swoops, dives, turns, each on a different geometrical plane, followed each other rapidly. Fowler said that his head was completely turned. Mine would have been if I had not been too busy. The roc formation was completely broken up, and I was able to dart my plane through a large opening left between several diamonds, members of which had actually collided in their confusion. My formulae had got them off their balance. It was dark and there was no enemy in sight. We were free to fly to Winnipeg, the allied base.

On our way there, Fowler and I pooled our observations, and made deductions. Our conclusions were exactly the same, and particularly clear about the rocs' ability to read minds.

"Did you notice," I said, "how they worked together? There is perfect unity of action."

"Like pigeons," was his comment.

"Exactly. It is a development of the way pigeons fly. You have noticed how they turn, soar, dive, come together, spread out fan-shape, and huddle. In all these movements by pigeons there is no response to orders. No orders are given, you may see. If there were there would be a hesitation, a definite action, instead of the simultaneous movements that do occur. Think of a perfectly drilled body of troops on a parade ground. They are on the alert for their orders. When they receive them they carry them out exactly, but there is an interval, a perceptible one. The movement is a response. With pigeons it is not a response, but unity of purpose itself. The rocs work in this same way, but have developed it so that instead of the few simple unities of the pigeon they can do incalculable numbers of things together without formal consultation. They have been living in that inside world of theirs, and looking out of the peep-holes much as we look out at the stars, and probably with as little knowledge and as much wild speculation and especially denial as we indulge about the heavens above us. That earthquake opened up the outside world to them, and it is very much as though the heavens became suddenly accessible to us. They came out to see things."

"Yes," replied Fowler, "and they are seeing things, and learning. We too. And the animals in our part of Earth—I wonder if they will learn that their two-legged world masters are in trouble. Well, they are in the same boat with us. We eat them, but so do the rocs, and it is very little to an ox who preys on him."

4

MY RECONNOITERING RAID and its results caused a very uncomfortable feeling in the breasts of the human race. There was an uneasiness abroad, an idea that possibly man was threatened in what he had never even considered his citadel, but merely his dwelling, needing no protection.

In foreign countries very kind things began to be said about "our threatened American brothers" in newspapers and parliaments where comment had not always been so sympathetic. A common danger began to draw the world together. And the raids continued. Men and animals disappeared, some of them in sight, some of them without being seen to go.

The next encounter was even more discouraging. Lieutenant Camillo Perelli, second to fight and fall, had profited by the experience of Fowler. When he sighted a roc at Buffalo Lick, Minnesota, where he was stationed, he did not take off at once and under him, as his predecessor had done. Waiting until the quarry had gone away some distance, he spiraled up about ten thousand feet, and then suddenly shot toward him from behind. He never could tell his own story, but observers described what happened.

"When I saw Perelli come after that bird like a streak of lightning," said old Andrew Peterson, a neighboring farmer, "I said to myself, that Eye-talian knows his business. He'll pepper him good and plenty."

He did know his business, but his tools were not good enough. He opened fire at about five hundred yards, but nothing happened. Closer and closer, and still nothing happened, except that the great roc began to soar. There were no flying feathers, no fluttering wings, no staggering fall, as had been expected.

"Is it possible that he is not hitting?" asked the onlookers. "Hardly so. He is a practised machine-gunner, and the mark is bigger than a barn, let alone a barn door."

If he was hitting, as seemed probable by the roc's change of direction, he was not hurting him, much less frightening him; for the hunted became the hunter, circled up, swooped, and knocked Perelli and his plane out of all balance to the ground. Plainly the machine-gun bullets did not wound. It was important to learn why.

The problem had now become much more difficult. It was bad enough when the rocs merely outflung the aviators. Much worse when the machine-

gun, the only handy weapon, was not powerful enough. The situation was very much as if a punitive expedition against African savages had been whipped on equal terms. One thing stood out as essential. We must get a dead roc. We must know how they were built, and what was the protective element that would turn fifty-caliber machine-gun bullets at two hundred yards.

All this I told Eddie Hartshorn, one of American's best flyers in the war. He had dropped in at A. R. C. (anti-roc-headquarters) to offer his services.

"I'll get one," he said. "I can get to one, anyway. And I'll make sure of him."

"How?"

"Ram him."

I am glad to say that I was not such a fool as to make the banal answer, "You won't come back." He could hardly have expected to do that.

Hartshorn's offer was accepted, and he was provided with the largest and heaviest plane in the country. He took it to the most likely point, but made the pertinent comment, "Rocs do not fly to order. I'll bet some one will beat me to this."

Someone did. As soon as the hundreds of flyers heard of his idea each one telephoned to A. R. C., "There is no copyright on Hartshorn's scheme. I'm going to try it if I can." That is, everyone but one. It never occurred to Lieutenant Roy Anderson, son of General C. P. Anderson, U. S. Army, who was the scion of a line of soldiers that had served in every war of the republic, that he should volunteer. That went without saying to him.

He sighted the roc, went up after it in the way that poor Perelli had shown safe, and hit him at a speed of a hundred and seventy-five miles an hour.

This time the man scored. The great roc came fluttering and twisting to the ground, just like any little bird that has been shot. He was not dead, nor helpless by any means, but could not take the air again nor get on his feet. There he lay, thrashing and screaming, still a formidable object.

He had fallen near Springfield, Illinois, and the whole state started for the scene at once. Autos by the thousands, planes by the hundred, jammed the roads and made the air unsafe. One intelligent spectator suggested keeping him alive and exhibiting him at five dollars a person.

"You're the kind of guy that would try to bag the Miami hurricane and run your windmill with it," commented the local policeman, who was first on the scene.

Everyone who had a shotgun, a revolver, or rifle brought it and emptied it at the fallen enemy. The effect was about the same as firing a pea-shooter at an elephant. A siege battery of artillery was started from Fort Sheridan. It was not needed, however, as a local well-digger blew the life out of the roc with dynamite. Before he did it there was an interruption. The well-digger had come as near as he dared, when the cry came: "Hold on, let me get away first." It was from Lieutenant Anderson, who had miraculously escaped. When the plane hit its target, he had taken the precaution to unstrap himself from his seat. He was catapulted onto the roc's back, where he landed in a mass of feathers.

It was not a soft bed, he at once found out. What looked like feathers were heavy, wire-like pendants, resembling so much steel wool. They formed a mass at least twelve inches thick, and as hard as iron. Their edges were sharp, and cut like knives. Anderson was a sight. His aviator's suit and gloves had saved him from being cut to pieces, but the leathers had gone right through them in many places, and slashed him all over his body. His face, unprotected, had been cut so that he had almost lost semblance of a human being.

"No wonder bullets can not hurt these birds," commented some officers who had reached the scene in planes. "Why, a down pillow will stop a shot from a revolver. It would take some missile to go through that mess."

5

THE UNITED STATES ARMY had killed its first assailant in this novel war. It was now its business to find out what he was like. Soldiers and scientists took the fallen foe to pieces and made a thorough examination. It was not an easy job. "Like pulling a nest of knives to pieces," was the comment of one. "One false move, and you are slashed."

The publicity department of the army, now fully mobilized, issued a non-technical description in the form of a regular war bulletin. "The so-called roc is a bird, with reptilian traits. It is six hundred feet in spread of wing. Length of body, one hundred and seventy-five feet. It has five talons on each foot, twelve feet long and eighteen inches thick at the

base. The bill is twenty feet long, and two feet through its substance in the thickest part. Feathers of tail, ninety feet. Eight inches through. The body is covered with short feathers, forming an armor impenetrable to anything but high explosives, or armor-piercing shells. Stomach contained the remains of several cattle, horses, and men. There was also much half-digested grain. Sex, female. Six partly formed eggs. Dissection was very difficult. Feathers, bill, etc., were so hard that only metal-working tools could be used."

We had now a fair idea of what we had to fight. The general public was much reassured. They were just big birds, after all. Artillery and bombs for them. See how quickly dynamite killed the one that had fallen.

I did not share the optimism. As I turned away from the scene, where I had been present as an observer for the general staff, I thought of the size, agility and resisting power of our foes. Above all, I considered what had not been thought worth while to put in the bulletin—the great size and deep convolutions of the brain.

"We have seen that these birds can learn," I pondered. "What will they learn next? Our standard is what we call human intelligence. They are outside of this category. They have an intelligence of their own."

A council of war was called to determine the best way to fight the invaders in the light of our new knowledge.

"It is all very well to speak of artillery and dynamite," said one old general, "but we must get said artillery and dynamite on the ground: They do not come where we want them, nor wait for us to get to work. I have seen enough of the futility of anti-aircraft guns to know how difficult it will be to shoot them down." There was general agreement to this.

The chief of staff spoke: "I am afraid that the only thing for us to do is to keep on ramming them, as Anderson did. It will be a plane and a life for a roc, as of course we all recognize that Anderson's escape was a lucky accident. In general, the aviator will die with his victim. Gentlemen, we must carry on as he started. There will be plenty of volunteers. It really is our only chance."

The assent to this was almost as unanimous. I was the only exception. "Gentlemen," I said, "these rocs can learn. They will learn every time. The way to beat them is to devise an offensive that they cannot meet. We hardly realize what a tremendous proposition we are up against. Why, their size and power are outside all our ideas. And the food they consume! Have you noticed that they have not carried away a child

yet? Too small. I do not think they take a man unless they see him from an angle that gives an impression of size from his height.

"We must beat them at once. If we do not, they will see that we are living in a mechanical age and start one themselves. If they are holding more than even with their naked wings, beaks, and talons, what will they do if they start to make implements of war? They have the brains, but have never needed to live anything but the simple life.

"Think what they have done! I could plainly see that the big gash through which I entered their world has just been made by an earthquake. There inside they have been living. As Fowler and I have reported, they live off the meat of animals that are large to us but small and inoffensive to them. When they want them they strike them down with a blow. They know nothing about fighting, because they have never had to fight. The earthquake came, Earth opened above them, and they flew out. They encountered the most highly mechanized civilization in the world, with a people skilled in the arts of war. Yet so far they have beaten us almost every time.

"War! War, it can be their game if they are not quickly checked. Look at my experience! The flying funnel which they improvised in their short pursuit. They wanted to catch me alive and my plane uninjured. A most difficult problem of warfare. If I had not had my geometrical maneuvers to fall back on I should now have been undergoing a mental examination in Rocland.

"The first thing for us to do is to mass our artillery and planes. The Middle West is really hostile country now. We are garrisoning it. It is not military practise to scatter garrisons in a hostile country unless it has been subdued. We should mobilize, and try to make some attacks. We shall hear from the rocs very soon, I am sure. That is, in a military way. We constantly, of course, hear of their raids on the defenseless inhabitants. You may be sure that they will beat our ramming game."

My views provoked general dissent. The meeting was about to break up, and orders were to be sent out to ram every roc seen, when the telephone rang. As lowest in rank, I answered it. The news was bad. "Wait a minute, gentlemen," I said. "This is important."

What I heard was this: A girl's voice on the long distance. "Is this General Staff? I am Alice Chase, speaking from my home on my father's farm in Wade Crossing, South Dakota. I am giving a message from Captain James McCarthy, United States Army. He is badly wounded.

and in the room with my mother holding him. He was just brought down with his plane by a roc. He says, 'Ramming won't work. Those birds can meet it without trouble. I got a good start after one, came close and stopped, rose behind me, and sent me down. Remember, I made no mistakes, but I had no chance. Neither will anyone else who tries that line.'—Yes, mamma, I hear you.—My mother tells me that that poor soldier has just died in her arms. Oh, Dear!"

F

THE CHIEF OF STAFF, when in France, had been nicknamed "Old Switcher." A judgment, to him, was something to revise. He lived up to his old reputation in the present emergency.

"Well, Latham," came his clear tones before I had fairly dropped the instrument, "it is plain that the ramming plan has failed. You have a plan, I know, or you would never have condemned that one. What is your idea?"

"Gentlemen," I replied, "I have suggested massing our forces. That, you will understand, is not a plan. It is merely to put them into position to carry out a plan.

"What we should do is to concentrate our principal mass of planes in overwhelming numbers. The principle is the old one of boys chasing squirrels. One squirrel can always keep on the side of a tree away from one boy. Usually a squirrel can elude two boys in the same fashion. But when three boys concentrate on one squirrel, he loses count. His faculties do not co-ordinate sufficiently to keep track of the three at once. And they get him in plain view and shoot him. That is what we should do to the rocs. Confuse them by numbers and they will fall an easy prey to bombs."

"Very good in theory," was the remark of the chief of aviation. "But you are proposing to use a large number of planes in a limited area. How are you going to keep them from ramming each other? How will they perform intricate and unexpected maneuvers in unison? How will they get orders? Will not every man be on his own?"

"My solution of this problem is one that I have hesitated to make known," I replied. "The fact is that I can run them myself. I propose to follow the force flying low in a heavily camouflaged machine. It will have an operator, a radio transmitting apparatus, and a large switch-board, which I shall work. Every plane will have a receiving outfit, with ear muffs on the aviator.

"The planes will be organized in squadrons, each machine of which will be in tune with the same plug on my board. All orders will be given by squadrons, which will operate as a unit under my orders. Co-ordinating their work will be extremely difficult, true, but I am confident that I can do it. I have made a special study of sky angles and their relation to planes (geometrical planes, you will understand). They are the foundation of all airplane maneuvering."

"I can indorse what Latham says about airplanes and air angles," broke in the assistant chief of staff, under whom I had served abroad. "I once saw him save the airplane he was flying by manipulating it in different planes of air until he made three German aviators dizzy."

By a unanimous vote I was given charge of the battle formations that were to combat the rocs in their own element. I at once began to drill them. The work was very complicated, even though I had it all my own way, in the absence of the enemy. Neither I nor anyone else had commanded and maneuvered an air army, and new problems arose at every moment.

Meantime the emergency had brought about one gratifying result. The human race had solidified against the foe. It was very plain that though the United States was the present sufferer, it was so only because its turn had come first. The rocs, everyone knew, would cross oceans without difficulty.

Accordingly offers of assistance poured in. England and France, without preliminaries, shipped the great air fleets they had gathered to fight men, to save humanity. President Von Hindenburg of Germany bluntly commented, "If the French and English can send their war planes, we can give our passenger machines." The many planes forming Germany's network of air routes were thereupon put upon Atlantic liners, to join her former foes. All the great war aviators from all countries volunteered for service, and swarmed to America. It was noted that the former foes were more chummy than those who had fought together. Frenchmen teamed up with Germans and Germans with Englishmen. "Sure," said an English ace, "why shouldn't we? We didn't bore each other so much." Soviet Russia sent a large contingent.

The foreigners readily accepted my idea of a central direction, and started drilling at once.

My great need from the first was for someone who could quickly make intricate mathematical computations. The mass of such work was very great. Many able computers were available for the ground work, but none was competent to dispose of a problem when fast figuring was

necessary. The need was fortunately and effectively supplied in unexpected fashion.

The chief of staff called up, saying, "I'm sending you a mathematical wizard. We have been trying him on everything from calculus to multiplication, and he can do anything. He will be all right if you can keep the girls away from him. Some sheik! Wait for Lieutenant Arthur Andrews."

The "sheik" arrived in a few minutes, and proved just what I wanted. The caution about the girls was needed. A party of rather haughty Red Cross nurses of high social standing were visiting the camp on business. All the lady-killers of whatever rank had been repulsed with a total loss. Someone was remarking that it was the coldest day in years, when Andrews hove in sight. The thermometer went up like a shot. Some of the nurses gurgled, and some gighed. Mr. Andrews, on the contrary, was not in the least interested. He never looked at the charmers, but came directly to my office, and reported.

He was all that the chief had represented, and more. "You are said to be a quick worker at problems," I informed him. "That is all very well, but what I need is someone who is good at averages. My typical case is like: one hundred and sixty planes are flying at a given height and interval. They sight ten rocs at irregular distances, which we compute at once. Where will they meet? I'm going to set you that to work as quickly as possible."

In solving that problem in his head, by the law of averages, and closely approximating the slow mathematical computation, he solved the other, of who was to be my assistant, my other self.

The first air division soon began to take a shape as a unit. It was composed of American and foreign flyers, most of them with reputations gained in the late unpleasantness. On February 22nd, George Washington's birthday, it first came in contact with the enemy. Two rocs were sighted near Fort Worth, Texas, while the division was maneuvering.

My squirrel idea was correct. Forty planes circling above, with thirty behind, in front, and on each side, bewildered the great birds. They were smartly bombed, and blown to pieces with no loss on our side. A victory, but there were many rocs. And they had never failed to learn from each setback. We kept on training. In April there were six thousand plane units in service, roughly one-half American, the rest foreign. I commanded corps, armies, and army groups of aerial units.

My assistant, now Captain Andrews, was invaluable. We soon came

to be on most friendly terms. Some of his ways were rather queer. One day I found it necessary to explain to him that the duties of a military secretary were not exactly universal.

"Say, Andrews, a secretary is supposed to take care of his chief's money, to stall off girls ('I haven't seen any girls bothering you,' he murmured) and to do most of his work. But he is not expected to censor his toothbrushes. You are responsible for this new one, are you not? Nobody but a wife can throw away a man's toothbrush. And although you bully your superior officer like a wife, you are obviously not that."

"I should hope not!" came in a tone that struck me as very curious. It was not until Andrews blushed when a British aviator asked him if he was related to his old friend, Arthur Andrews, that I suspected anything. He denied any relationship, which was true enough. True because, according to his papers, he was Lieutenant Andrews, himself, once of the British Army. Andrews had come to America after the war, become naturalized, and joined the reserves as a lieutenant. Another of my problems to work out.

Whatever its solution, it did not require action. Arthur was brave, wonderfully efficient, and his work had become a necessary complement of my own. It was safe enough to keep him, as the spy problem did not exist in this war. Whatever his reasons for taking another man's name, they were obviously patriotic. And I liked him.

The fact was, that Arthur Andrews was Alice Chase. The real Andrews had hastily put on his uniform when Captain McCarthy went after a roc, as I have already told. There had been no record of his presence. When the plane crashed, he was instantly killed, and Miss Chase did not discover his body until she had reported McCarthy's death. Alice was the star mathematician at the University of Minnesota. She had made up her mind that she could serve her country in its emergency; so she put on Andrews' uniform, and took his name.

I very soon began to suspect that there was something different about Andrews. It was very pleasant to sit close to "him" in the course of business. That could come from friendship. But one day when I found that I liked it when "he" stood back of me and happened to breathe on my neck, I had a revelation. The so-called Andrews was a girl.

"Well," I thought, "she is such an essential helper that it is my duty to my country to keep her. I hope she is not married. On the whole, I don't think so. That toothbrush incident would never have happened unless the young lady meant to take possession."

Meantime, there were sterner things to confront. The rocs were raiding every day, and gradually the radius of their activities was becoming enlarged. They invaded the East, the Pacific Coast, and Mexico. Our concentrated forces seldom came in contact with them. We really wished no indecisive actions. They were too much for us unless we were in force.

7

I KEPT DRILLING ALL DAY and working out angles and the relations of airplanes and geometrical plane levels at night. It was an inspiring sight to view the maneuvers of a plane army, and to know that I had it under the control of my voice.

"Section 16, Second Division, drop to four thousand feet," I would command. And twenty planes obeyed like one. "Sections 4, 7, 12, First Division, raise speed to one hundred twenty." Sixty planes shot out in front of their companions who were doing one hundred miles an hour. "Second Division, thirty degrees east." An argosy swung.

We were soon to be challenged. A perfect April morning over the Kansas prairies. A grand maneuver of the Second Aerial Army before the President! And a delegation of distinguished foreign soldiers and statesmen. Marshal Petain and General Von Seeckt, first commander of the German Reichswehr, were to criticize.

"Not our kind of fighting at all," they had said, rather doubtful of much ability to help. "We are familiar enough with the use of planes as auxiliaries, but as first and second lines—well, we are not used to it." They reveled, however, in my mathematical calculations, and were interested in hearing Andrews' replies to posers.

Fighting seemed a long distance away as we climbed into our direction plane, which had been specially camouflaged. It was above all things essential that my plane keep in action. I was the sole directing force. I had attempted to run the air army as one on land is directed, by a staff and subordinates. The attempt had proved a complete failure. Orders were misinterpreted. Others reached the wrong units. Several planes had collided, with casualties. One-man direction was the only way, in the present status of planes and radio, that an air army could be run. So I must take no chances. The duty of others might be to die for their country. I must, above all, live for her.

The one thousand planes of the World's Second Army took the air.

Did you ever see a flock of pigeons turn, twist, rise, bend, fall, change direction as though directed by a single mind? That had been my ideal of direction. I had always kept that flock in mind, with, of course, the difference that my pigeons must be far apart. In some degree the ideal had been reached. It was a beautiful sight when the planes soared, fluttered, turned, changed distance, spread out, came together.

At the same instant, everyone seemed to spy the enemy. Shouts from the ground, signals from planes, booming of guns, reached my ears. It was an attack in force. With the intelligence that was all their own, the great birds had organized an air army. Ninety-eight were counted in the raid. They, too, could maneuver. No flock of pigeons ever worked together better.

At the first swoop, I saw sixty planes crash. This was my rough guess, from the vacancies I saw in the battle formation. Really, fifty-five came down. It was an unexpected raid, but that was what I had prepared against. This was where my work on geometrical planes was to count. The second World's Air Army, which had been in orderly array on the seven thousand foot level, under my quickly radioed orders, seemed to break up into unrelated units. Some climbed to fifteen thousand feet. From that level they were distributed at thousand foot intervals, down to six thousand feet. Some soared, others dipped. Some swung around in great circles, some in small. The seeming confusion was what I had counted on to puzzle our opponents. Maintaining it, and carrying the whole geometrical figure in my head, was a task that taxed my brains to the limit. And it was a figure that had to be constantly changing in all its parts. My practice and thorough preparation, along with a certain native aptitude for visualizing circles, angles, and geometrical planes enabled me to keep my seeming disorder orderly. On the ground below, many observers thought the army was in a panic. Not so the President, and Generals Petain and Von Seeckt. Their cool heads, although they could not follow the whole design, comprehended that a plan was working.

The rocs made another dash, this time at the twelve thousand foot level. The failure to be above all was their undoing. At thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen thousand feet were sections, their planes loaded with bombs. Those near by threw them with their hands. At a greater distance they were discharged from grenade guns. The birds, spreading six hundred feet from wing tip to wing tip, were easy targets. The bombs were so powerful that the feather armament was ripped wherever it was hit.

The slaughter was fearful, and not only among the rocs, In the first place, the planes on various levels were fairly close together. Any bomb that missed had a good chance to bring down a friend. The rocs, too, were busy in defeat. They took heavy toll of their enemies.

Unfortunately a great crowd had gathered to see the maneuver, and the attack was made just above the assemblage. Such bombs as did not hit a roc or a plane exploded when they struck the ground. When the planes crashed, they added to the quota of civilian casualties. And such rocs as were not blown to pieces, but had to come down because of broken wings, slashed and bit everyone in sight.

It may be imagined that I was too much occupied to see much of this. In fact, I was so busy that at the last moment, when all the rocs I could see had been disposed of, I nearly emulated General Desaix at the battle of Marengo by dying in the moment of victory. My secretary, as usual, was on the job and very unwilling that I should become a dead hero.

I had overlooked the last two rocs, but they had not overlooked me. The camouflage had been an efficient protection all the morning. But some freak of the nooday sun must have disclosed it to the last survivors. While I was bringing the army down to earth, they swooped. I heard a cry from Andrews into the transmitter. "Sections 9, 11, Third Divison, to two thousand foot level, and bomb." Neither rocs nor sections had far to go. The attackers struck our plane at the same time that three bombs hit them. Down we all came, luckily without smashing the fuselage. We were safe.

We had won the first real battle. Whose would be the final victory? It was a more important question than in the wars of men. With those, even a complete conquest and annexation had meant the absorption of the winner by the loser, as in the case of the Roman Empire and the Norman invasion of England. The roc absorption would be physical. They would eat us.

"Well, anyhow, it will take them some time to become mechanized," wrote one popular commentator. "The Occident has been at it a century and a half, and it took the Japanese forty years just to copy." We of Mankind's General Staff, now our official title, were not so sure. Soldiers know that there is such a thing as resourcefulness and improvization. We credited the rocs with it.

There was a puzzling occurrence a week after the battle. Just two raids, but they picked the largest munition factory in the country for them. The plant was in the mountains of West Virginia and made air-

plane bombs for roc battles. A day later an equal number came back and rummaged around.

"We worked in wooden sheds, flimsy affairs, and lots of them," said a woman worker who saw both raids. "That is so that an explosion will not wreck the whole plant. When the rocs came back they smashed the sheds just by their weight. They spent a long time peering around and gathering up tools, and so far as I could make out, raw material. It was very hard for them. The tools are small and made for men and women. The raw material was in steel pigs, bags of saltpeter, boxes of fuses and the like. They seemed to know what they wanted, but they had an awful time getting it away. The tools, boxes, rods, and pigs kept slipping out of their beaks and claws. They left a regular trail behind them, but probably got away with the best of it."

"Looks like one of the trench raids we used to put over on each other in the late unpleasantness," commented Major Kramer, whose point of view in that conflict had been toward the American forces. Now it was parallel. "Remember, we would raid each others' lines for prisoners and shake them down for information?" We on the staff agreed with him, but the general public thought the raid was merely another one for food and to satisfy curiosity.

"Mankind" was preparing for battle. It would have to be a battle, too. We of the military knew that there would be no short cut. The popular idea was the much dreaded gas. "Cover them with a blanket of it. Send all the planes we can get together loaded with gas bombs, and drop them at a given signal. Every living thing in Rocland will die." This read well, and sounded well in conversation, but Rocland covered about three hundred thousand square miles, and there was not enough gas in the world to blanket more than a corner of it.

"We shall have to fight it out, plane to roc," said our commander. "Just now it will be against bare claws and beaks, but if we wait too long, they will mechanize themselves, and we shall have no chance. I think we can get ready for our invasion of the North in a couple of months, and that we should make haste even to the point of taking chances. We have nothing but an air force. No other could get near Rocland.

We were left unmolested in our preparations. Whether at night ominous shadows that might have been clouds were roc scouts "thinking in" on our deliberations, as in the old wars men had similarly worked and listened in on enemy wireless and telephone, was matter for conjecture. We really did not know whether the thought transference of our

adversaries worked equally well at a distance, or only near by. The general opinion was that distance made for confusion of thought, and that there was need of a certain concentration obtainable only at close quarters. This point has never been cleared up, and it will be impossible ever to tell whether or not there were spies in the air.

8

SUDDENLY, AFTER TWO MONTHS, there were indications from Alaska of a great enemy offensive, and of the dreaded mechanical kind. On June 10, 1930, the cable from Nome stopped working. Ice or tangled whale was at first supposed to be the reason. When, in addition, the local wireless station did not answer, the world was sure that something had happened to Nome. Ships in the neighborhood also failed to answer wireless messages. Next day there was a glimpse of light. Sergeant Hopkins, of the Canadian Mounted Police, broadcast this message from Mc Farland Post, a lonely station on the Arctic: "Troopers O'Connor and Jones just died suddenly, seemingly overcome by some kind of gas. I am feeling faint and think I got a whiff. Am afraid to go near where they are on the shore, about two hundred yards from here. Am going across wind to try and get away from the danger. Hopkins."

Two days later a gas-masked figure in a motorboat turned up at Tyro Point, an American fishing-station on Bering Sea, one hundred and fifty miles from Nome. He was Albert Ludlow, the only survivor of the population of that once flourishing American town. Ludlow told the story of how the city was gassed.

"I had served overseas and always been very careful of gas," he said. "My mask had been a good friend in France, and I packed it along wherever I went for ten years. Luckily for me, too. Two days ago I was in my room looking out of the window at the sun, which was getting a little low, about nine o'clock. The usual summer evening Arctic baseball game was going on in the lots across the street. The center fielder had just started after a fly when he dropped in his tracks, clutched at his throat for a second, and then ceased to move. Then the first baseman dropped in the same way. There was the usual knot of spectators to the right of the home plate in the general direction from center field on through the first baseman's position. Before anyone could run to the aid of the players the spectators began to drop, too, clutching at their throats, and then relaxing.

"My war training served then. Hardly by thought, but more by instinct, I grabbed my mask from my bureau drawer, and put it on. Old as it was, it worked and kept out the gas, thank heaven. It was needed, too. In the few seconds that had elapsed, the gas—of what kind I don't know, nor where it came from—had spread from the one narrow line it had taken first, and was in many sectors. Bound by invisible lines, people were living and dying. They could not see it, and I heard them yell that they could smell nothing. Up the street one block was full of life, the next of death. People did not know what to do. The death essence was spreading. If they ran, they would probably run into it. If they stayed still, it would come to them. I saw no one else with a gas mask. Some cool individuals saved themselves for a time by running down the lanes of life, keeping as far from where the dead were on each side as possible, and taking a course down wind. Even these were gradually caught as the main body of the gas, of which the lanes of death were the feelers, gradually spread solidly over the city.

"I waited until this happened, and then started down wind with the fleeing citizens. Some were running as fast as they could. Some were on bicycles, some in automobiles, but within half an hour the gas had caught up to them. As I trudged along the coast I first came upon the slow runners, the women, the old and weak. Next the cyclists, who had fallen from their wheels. Last were the automobiles, whose occupants, as they were overcome, had lost control. Some machines had run out into the waves until their carbureters were flooded; others had smashed against some obstacle, driftwood, or sandbank. One was still running a shaky course in a clear space of beach. All the refugees, afoot, awheel, in motor, were dead. Obviously everyone in the city was dead, too. My job was to get out if I could. I could not wear a gas mask forever. This motorboat was in a cove with someone who had evidently been its owner lying dead where he had been cranking the motor. I started it, and ran down the coast to this settlement. I have worn my gas mask all the time. Until I saw you people alive and unruffled I had no means of knowing whether there was gas in the air or not. Those rocs must have sent it. They certainly learn fast."

THE STORIES OF LUDLOW and the Canadian policeman stirred up the gas propagandists. "Suffocate the rocs, or they will suffocate us," was the cry. It was a difficult one to answer, but it was im-

possible to do. Facts are stubborn things, and there was not enough gas in the possession of the human race. A quick offensive was the only resource.

Mankind was able to muster six thousand planes near enough to Rocland to reach it with gasoline enough for maneuvering. Each was loaded to its limit with high explosive and gas bombs. We did not know how many rocs there were. A mere guess by Fowler and me was that there were fifty thousand grown ones. Our bombs were so powerful that if we could get among them we could make havoc.

The expedition started on July 16th from its Canadian base. I headed the advance guard, composed of squadrons by nationality. "No sign of rocs," I said to my chief of staff, Captain Andrews promoted.

"No, sir, and there hasn't been for weeks," was the reply. "They must have something up their sleeves — I mean wing feathers."

The miles rolled by, and still there were no rocs. We neared their country, but were unopposed.

"No scouts," I said.

"Looks very peculiar," came the answer.

Even when we reached the great depression, with its warmth-giving volcanic pillars, there was the same silence. As we passed the brow of the precipice, ready for action, we were still unopposed. We had been flying high, but now took lower levels for action. As we did so, we saw rocs, plenty of them, but strangely inert. Other animals, too, megatheriums, mastodons, mammoths, rhinoceroses, all the abundant fauna that the birds had bred just as we do cattle, to eat, were scattered over the ground. They, too, were all silent.

"Dead!" I yelled into the wireless phone. "Dead!" shrieked the pilots of six thousand planes, each into his phone.

Who or what had done our work for us?

It plainly was safe to land. Nothing in Rocland could hurt us now. The air was pure, but the attitudes of the dead suggested gassing.

The land animals lay in all attitudes, some of them pitched on their sides, some with their necks twisted under them, those of the elephant family on all four knees. The mother rocs had stuck to their eggs or young, as they were sitting or brooding. Their forms towered up, not unlike giant statues of resting eagles, their heads settled in on their breasts. The eggs or young could be dimly seen under the mother that had unavailingly attempted to protect them with her life. Many of the other rocs had similarly been overcome on the ground, or at low altitudes, where their buoyancy had permitted the inert body to sink to

the earth without damage. Others had been flying high when the death wisp caught them. These had fallen thousands of feet and were horribly smashed.

A surgeon performed a short autopsy on a dead mastodon. It was a small one, but at that he had to have the help of a couple of company butchers. He reported that it had been overcome by some kind of gas.

Our expedition pressed on in regular flying order, encountering nothing but the dead. About three hundred miles from the boundary of the country of the rocs, I descried a prostrate form that was smaller than the rest. "A man," was my guess. A look through the field glasses confirmed it. We were now probably in a position to find out what had happened. "Dead men tell no tales" is a proverb that is useful only to thieves. The body was lying on its back, about five hundred yards from a ragged hole in the ground that was, I judged, about two hundred yards across.

Just as I had hoped, this man did tell his tale—not by word of mouth, but by a diary he had kept until the instant of death. The book, of the pocket variety, was just where it had dropped from his left hand. On the cover was tooled, "James P. Black, Hardy Springs, West Virginia." January 1st to April 15th, 1930, told the story of the organization of the munition plant that had been raided by the rocs. Black was the general manager. He had been appointed in the late fall, strictly on his merits as a master of both theory and practice in the manufacture of bombs. April 15th was the date of the roc raid on the arsenal. He made his entry for that day on the sixteenth, when a captive.

10

April 15. I am making this entry a day late. Yesterday I was not too busy but much too helpless to write. At nine o'clock in the morning my chauffeur was driving me around the plant in an open car when something swooped. I was grabbed, not very roughly, but in a viselike grip, and carried off. I saw the chauffeur on the ground with a rip that had almost cut him in two. The roc (it was easy to guess that) snatched several workers and flew away with us. I thought of Fowler, who had been carried away, and afterward rescued, and wondered if his luck would be mine. Not very likely. We landed last night as the sun was low. The date and the location of Rocland made me guess that it was about nine o'clock, which I confirmed from my watch, uninjured. It was

a long hard flight for us and the rocs as well. I was so stiff that I could hardly move for a while. Our captor, when he dropped us, tried to hop away, but fell over on his side, unable to keep his feet. Just like those of smaller beings, they had gone to sleep from the cramped position in holding on to us. We were at once surrounded at a distance of a hundred feet (they were too big to form a closer circle) by several birds, who looked as though they were there for business and not for curiosity. I soon found that I was right. My thought was, "They are smart, but not smart enough. They raided the bomb factory, and got the super and some good workmen, all right. But we can do nothing with our bare hands and with no raw material. It looks as though there were saltpeter and other minerals here, at that." The rocs looked at each other, and all flew away at once, leaving only two guards. What a fool I had been! I had forgotten Fowler's tale of thought transference, and had been given the third degree without any trouble. I had betrayed the human race. Unpleasant thought, but I was so tired that I soon went to sleep.

April 16th. They have herded up the captives. A couple of hundred, and a bunch of the best workmen I had. We are going to make bombs or die, I guess. Just ate megatherium meat. One of the boys had seen a reproduction of a fossil once in a museum, and recognized it when a roc drove it up, waddling along on its piano legs. The roc gave it a contemptuous cuff, which ripped off its six-foot head, and left it for us. There was plenty of brush for a fire, and of course most of the boys had matches. We had a good meal soon. There is always someone who can cook well in a bunch of first class mechanics.

April 17. Just as I guessed. I have betrayed the human race. Those rocs beat it as soon as I had those fool thoughts about being unable to do anything with bare hands, and raided the plant again for tools and material. I am afraid I shall have to save my life by working for the enemy. So will the rest. One thing is sure. Whatever I do must be on impulse. I must not think. I thought once and see what happened! I may be able to do some good, if I keep my mind free from plans.

April 18. We are at work, making bombs for our enemies. I have no excuse. I should hate to copy Talleyrand's answer to the question what he did during the Reign of Terror: "I lived."

April 19. "This is a stock country," said a Texas cowboy last night. "And they know how to raise it. All fat and in fine condition." "That is right," remarked Ignatieff, once of Russia. "These rocs have improved the breeds. I have seen the mammoths in the museum at Leningrad. They are not half so big as these twenty-five-foot-high brutes with sides squared out, no hollows, and lots of meat. Look at their tusks, too. Almost bred out. I have not seen a pair more than three feet long, and two-thirds have no tusks at all. Why, the mammoths and mastodons in museums have them sticking out six or eight feet! No good at all for eating, so they have bred them away."

April 20. Wandered away three or four miles from our camp, which is in a cave near one of the chimneys that heat up the place. No restrictions after I had done a fair day's work. There are sentinels all around, and they can see much farther than I could go in a day. Came upon something peculiar. A piece of ground that looked like geyser land. I could not get very close, because there was a roc sentinel. He was a couple of hundred yards away himself, and would not let me go any closer. Thought it was some secret at first, and then noticed that, near a small, low mound of stones, there were several dead animals. I at once saw why the sentinel was keeping me away. He was not guarding a secret, but protecting us. Some kind of gas was evidently escaping, and it was fatal to life. Anything to do about it? I must not think! I must not plan! Remember what happened before when I thought! I betrayed my kind! Heaven grant that these birds can only penetrate the conscious mind. If they can enter my sub-conscious thoughts, I am helpless! I can not control those.

April 21-30. I have been too busy to make any entries, and must lump them for the last days of this month. Wish I was home! We are working away at bombs, and shall have some ready soon. Nice job we are doing. These birds will be able to use them as well as we can. They speak our language; that is, the universal language of thought. It needs no words or translation. They understand our methods and have helped us mine and do heavy work, the kind for which power is needed. Power enough in them! Writing or language, they do not seem to have any. Perhaps they had one once, but with their thought-reading have forgotten it. Only the young ones make a noise. And they certainly make enough. I have made remarks about the lack of discipline in American families, but our children are angelic compared to those of the rocs. From the

moment they come out of their ten-foot eggs they are up to something. They are strong enough in a few days to kill any animal in the country, and, but for sentinels everywhere, they would. The old ones have their work cut out for them. Strange to say, however, they seem to get over their youthful cussedness. I have not seen any row among the grown-ups. What a lovely fight two of them would put up if they did get in an argument! Talk about roosters! Six hundred feet spread of wings. How the feathers would fly!

This is a civilization of intellect only. These birds, with their wonderful brains, live on the ground. They have no fires, no improvements whatever. They have built nothing, developed nothing, except the breed of food animals. Yet they have their thoughts, their customs of life, take wives and husbands, and live peaceably and without work. The hoboes' dream, one would say, but they are not hoboes. They have learned to control every instinct, to think, but not to do.

Not my idea at all. I like to work, to be creating and changing things. My characteristics can be judged by my clothes, that is, if you know the Secret. They are a little idea of the Secretary of War, given when he put me in charge of the works at \$75,000 a year!

"Wear light-colored sporty clothes, and if I catch you with them dirty I shall know that you have been putting your hands into the work and fire you. You are the big boss, and your job is to keep your hands off and your eyes on." So I still have on my "working-clothes" — a light gray hat, a pair of sport shoes, a white shirt, and a gray suit. They are dirty now, and I have my hands in the work.

May 1. All these roc sentries over animals, gas holes, children, and us must rather welcome the work. I realized this from a remark of a rather rough fuse-tester who is not particularly fond of keeping busy: "Talk about slow places! This is deader than any tank town I was ever in. You say that these birds have probably been here for many thousands of years, doing nothing but sit around and think? They have had things all their own way, and never had to work? Wotta life! Just watchin' the animals. This war must be a relief to them."

May 2. I have found out why they are so anxious to get on the earth. This country is going to freeze up, and they must leave. Until the crust about them fell in, doubtless burying many, it was warm enough, but the chimneys, or dying volcanoes, had been going fast. I noticed as I was being carried in, that the vegetation around

the borders was dying, evidently bitten by frosts. There is a chimney a few miles from our camp that has just gone out. In a year or so this whole country will be arctic. All the life is huddling closer and closer to the center, near which we are. It is just a population and stock center at that. No buildings, nothing made by living beings, except our rude bomb plant, the first mechanical effort in this land of pure intellectuality.

May 3-30. Still busy bomb-making. There has been a failure. Some misunderstanding about where tests should be held, and as a result a premature explosion. Six men were killed, and one roc lost a foot. They understand now that there must be a clear open space for tests.

June 5. A large tract of land in the neighborhood of the gas hole has been selected for the tests. We are transporting a number of bombs there, and expect to hold the tests soon. The ground around there is somewhat hollow under foot, but that will not stop the tests. I almost thought!

June 8. We hold the tests today. A number of bombs are scattered over several hundred yards near the gas hole, and we shall learn a lot about our bombs and their effects.

My business is to make and test the bombs, and not to think about effects. All is ready. My detonator is connected to a whole string of bombs. Hurrah! I did not think!

11

HERE THE DIARY ENDED ABRUPTLY. The heroic Black had detonated his charges, and died. The manner of his death, however, was different from the expectation that he must have entertained in his sub-conscious mind. The result was much better than he had had a right to expect. What such a trained engineer as he was would have forecast was a cataclysmic explosion of the gases that were underneath the neighborhood. This would have destroyed all life for many miles around, and made a much larger hole in the ground than the one we found, which was only about two hundred yards across. The destruction would, however, however, have been only a calamity to the rocs. It would not have extinguished life in more than a few hundred square miles, and Rocland was larger than Texas. Most of its formidable population would have been free and well, and we should have had to fight them.

What happened was this: The gas was deadly, but, possibly something like helium, not explosive. All the material destruction was caused by the powerful, well-made bombs, which ripped a great hole in the ground. The gas streamed out, with, we may well imagine, the force of a moderate tornado. It quickly covered all of Rockland, and, as we saw, killed everything in that territory, which is, by now, almost a part of the conventional arctic regions.

The gassing of Nome and the Canadian post were due to clouds carried in their direction by a freak of the wind. The rest of the gas has been lost in the atmosphere of Earth. It was just a pocket below the land of rocs, and all of it came out at once, as proved by the pure atmosphere we found a few days later.

The heroic James P. Black was buried in Arlington, and his diary is in the Congressional Library.

As for me, I was now free to take up my private concerns and wasted no time in going about them. The first concern was with my chief of staff.

"Captain Andrews, where is your Adam's apple?" I asked, pointing at a very pretty neck.

"I am not the kind of a person that has an Adam's apple," was the quick answer. "And my name is not Captain Andrews any more; it is Alice Chase."

"Well, Alice Chase, will you change your name again, permanently and quickly?" was what I considered quite a snappy reply.

"Of course I will. Haven't I been taking care of you for months? Do you think I am going to give up the job?"

So for the first time in the history of the United States Army, two of its officers married each other. The newspaper photographers were much disgruntled because Alice wore a gown and veil instead of her uniform.

"So commonplace," they said.



It Is Written

Back in the 20s and 30s, when magazines like *WEIRD TALES*, *AMAZING STORIES*, *SCIENCE WONDER STORIES*, etc., were the chief markets for weird, fantastic, and science fiction, the general practice was to pay for manuscripts accepted on publication; and it was often a long time between acceptance and publication—several years was by no means uncommon. Here at *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*, it is also necessary to wait for publication before payment, and our authors frequently have to wait quite a period before an accepted story sees print. We regret this situation, but are not yet in a position to alter it.

However, for whatever consolation it may bring, I can tell our authors that book publishers may take a long time to publish accepted material, too, although payment is upon acceptance usually. The most vivid example I know of in this respect is the story of Sam Moskowitz's anthology, *The Man Who Called Himself Poe*, which you'll find reviewed in this issue.

Early in 1966, Sam called me to say that he was putting together a "different" sort of anthology; he'd sold Doubleday on the idea of bringing out a collection of stories in which Edgar Allan Poe appears as a character, along with some material—but not too much—about Poe.

He planned to round the volume off with poems about Poe, and wanted to know if I minded his using one that I'd had publish back in 1942. I did, indeed; it's one of many which was as good as I could do at the time, but has since struck me as being far less than good. Well, said Sam, would you consider writing a new poem about EAP especially for this book?

Barkis was willing, but I thought a fair warning was in order. I do not, these days when I write poetry at all (and there's years at least in between) write the sort of poetry that I was doing back in the 40s—accepted standard rhyme pattern poetry. Not that I despise this, but that I do not feel that I can do it well enough any more to make it worth the trouble—the pattern, to me, is too confining; I find that it tends not only to choose my words but also my feelings for me. This is, of course, strictly a personal limitation and does not imply any sort of inferiority, etc., about standard forms. So I said, I'll gladly try, Sam, but on the condition that if you are not satisfied it, you're under no obligation to accept it just because I wrote it to order.

I hadn't read Poe (except for stories reprinted here and in SMS for years). So I picked up my copy of the Walter J. Black edition of the collected works, read through Hervey Allen's biographical sketch and through the poetry, then started to

draft the thing for Sam. It came out not entirely unlike what you'll find in the volume, but I wasn't satisfied; and most of all, I felt a few specific details that were not in the sketch were really needed. So I picked up a copy of Allen's full length biography, *Israfel*, at a second hand store, and not only got details that were useful but managed to correct what otherwise would have been a silly error. Sam needed the mss. in a fortnight or so, and I managed to get it off to him in time. The next thing, and this was not too long later, was a check and a contract—both most generous. This was March 1966; the anthology had been turned in and Sam had received his advance.

He tells me that there was considerable indecision as whether to market the book as science fiction or mystery—and then someone decided that it ought to go as a straight trade book. Around the end of 1968, I was talking to Sam, asking him if he thought we'd live long enough to see the book come out, and he told me he'd inquired and the party he talked to said enthusiastically, "We've read the anthology and it's *good*!" The impression you get is that it had been lying there in the vault, unread for close to three years . . . Well, the ending's a happy one, except for Professor Mabbott, who died between the time his biographical introduction was accepted and paid for—Sam had to revise his own introduction to allow for this new fact. And the decision to issue it as a general trade book, rather than a special-category anthology was, I think, a very good one.

Every now and then we receive

a note from a subscriber informing us that he did not receive the latest issue of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*, and he is sure that his subscription has not run out. We check, discover that he is correct, and send him a copy at once. This is something that should not happen at all, but, alas, due to mechanical or other failures—sometimes involving the mails—it does happen. All we can do is to make amends by providing a missing issue and trying to discover and correct whatever went wrong. So if your subscription copy does not arrive after what seems a reasonable period, do not hesitate to write to us; certainly we do not want you to miss an issue any more than you do.

Due to conditions beyond our control, involving strikes and other misfortunes, recent issues have been greatly delayed; by the time this column is printed, we hope we will have gotten back to our schedule.

Richard Schmand's cover for our July issue proved to be the most controversial we have ever had on MOH. A number of you detested it, to put the matter mildly. Others, without expressing disapproval said it was positively the most gruesome cover scene they'd ever laid eyes on. Still others, agreeing with its gruesomeness, expressed hearty approval. We apologize for the error whereby the artist's name came out as Robert.

Reg Smith, who considered the cover "miserable", writes: from Santa Ana, California: "My reason for writing this letter, however, is to comment on the discussion of 'ephemeral trash', and 'subjective judgments'. Every magazine contains a certain

amount of ephemeral trash. However, one person may consider (in the case of *WEIRD TALES*) certain stories trash, while another person may like them. Literary judgments are a matter of personal taste more than anything else. Of course, there is such a thing as *bad* taste, but even that is subjective.

"A couple of years ago I got a letter from E. Hoffmann Price concerning my *WEIRD TALES* in the *Thirties* essay. (That was a subjective essay, if there ever was one.) Price probably knew Farnsworth Wright better than any of the WT writers, and he said: 'Wright once remarked to me, "Often I publish a story I don't fancy at all—I try to publish what I believe the readers will like." This, or words to that effect, did in their context indicate that he was well aware that some of his selections left his friends and associates thoroughly perplexed. Many a time I wondered what would have happened if he had rejected most or all of the muck which he published, and had instead offered yarns which were more akin to the better selections. I cannot go beyond speculation—after all, I read in his office a few fan letters in which readers applauded one of the dreariest, and to me, most unreadable blobs I have ever seen in print.'

"The above from Price tends to confirm that you are right in your speculations as to why Editor Wright often printed such miserable stuff
"

It's altogether too easy, knowing that the circulation of *WEIRD TALES* had become such by 1938 that Wright was forced to sell the title to another publisher in order to

keep the magazine going (with his continued editorial control as part of the deal), to decide that the "ephemeral trash" he ran along with the stories that the more literate members of his audience heartily approved was the cause of it. But this is a very dangerous assumption, and entirely subjective. We have seen magazines carefully (I might almost say cynically) slanted toward the non-discriminating and far from literary reader attain high circulation, while others which attempted excellence failed; we have also seen magazines which attempted excellence achieve a reasonable measure of it and succeed as well, while still others, which tried to imitate the low grade sort, disappeared rather soon. The question can be argued all night without coming to any provable conclusion. I remember asking a publisher once why, in his opinion, given two books of roughly equal excellence—even of the sort that we would consider mediocre—one turns out a very good seller, while the other loses. His reply was that if he knew the answer to that, he'd have a gold mine.

I, too, have accepted stories which I did not greatly fancy, or even did not like, simply because it seemed to me that such tales were well done on their own terms, and that a considerable percentage of my readers would like them. So far as comments from the readers go, I believe that I've guessed right more often than wrong in such instances.

There have been instances where readers did not agree with me about how good a story was—one which I considered particularly good—or found hidden excellence in a story which I considered all right, but not

much more than that. Every editor has to take a certain percentage of "well, all right" stories in order to fill an issue in time; and I'm sure that any of my colleagues has had the same experience of receiving raves about one of these, at times, rather than the one he considered really first class.

What makes the struggle to see the objective through the veils of subjectivity, to the extent that one can produce a magazine he is not ashamed to have his name in, worth while is that, over-all, the readers may confirm the editor's judgments. When this happens, you have a happy—though never entirely contented—editor and, sometimes, a reasonably long-lived magazine.

A reader who, I find, abbreviated his signature, writes: "Thank you for publishing the Cornwall stories. Dr. Keller is one of my real favorites . . . By the way, are you including *Unto Us a Child is Born* in the Cornwall series? The main character is: 'Jacob Hubler, seventh of that name and a direct descendant of that Jacobus Hubelaire, who had emigrated from Strassburg to Pennsylvania in 1740 . . . ' (*AMAZING STORIES*, July 1933). Not to mention Paul Hubler in *The Metal Doom*; or Jacob and his son Larry Hubler in *White Collars*; or Jacob Hubler of *The Doorbell*, who had a friend of the name, Henry Cecil (who wrote some poems called, *Songs of a Spanish Lover*, referred to in *A Biological Experiment*) . . .

"How do you suppose the Hubelaires got to Strassburg? Just who are these people, anyway?"

The *Tales From Cornwall* are fantasies, and I'm inclined to agree with those of our readers who would put them into the "fairy tale" genre. (Some readers who make this classification then judge that the stories are therefore not good, or therefore do not belong in MOH; others making this classification enjoy the stories and take the broad interpretation of our title "horror", as I do, myself.) I am using the collection which Dr. Keller put together before he died, and this does not include any of his science fiction wherein someone "Hubler" or "Henry Cecil", etc. appears. It would seem that the Good Doctor was very much taken with these two names, as he used them so frequently; but I'm not convinced that he intended any direct connection with the Hublers in the science fiction tales and the Hubelaires in his fantasy series. I could be mistaken about this; and it is not impossible that, had he lived, Dr. Keller might have collected another series with the intent of showing that the Hublers and Cecils of his future stories were descendants of the Hubelaires of fantasy. (Not impossible, but of low probability, I'd say.)

In any event, the stories originating in *AMAZING STORIES* are not available to me; and while I'm not averse to using some science fiction in MOH, *STARTLING MYSTERIES STORIES*, etc., these do not strike me (as much as I enjoy them) as being the right sort of science fiction for us.

Many readers have asked for *The Doorbell*, and I hope to accede to this request at a future time, if it is possible.

John Leavitt, who is one of the many readers who wrote in to identify the (William Hope Hodgson) story a reader asked about, and who found the cover " . . . more nauseating than horrible . . . ", writes: "Having an index to *STRANGE TALES* . . . I see *Guatemozin, the Visitant* is the fourth item you've published from the November 1931 issue. How about publishing *The Return of the Sorcerer*, by Clark Ashton Smith from the previous issue, or *The Black Mass*, by Col. S.P. Meek from the same one? Both have interesting titles."

But we have published the two stories you mentioned! *The Return of the Sorcerer* is in the Spring 1968 (#8) issue of *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES*, and *The Black Mass* is in the Summer 1968 (#9) issue.

Henry R. Sabieski, who says that the Cornwall stories leave him cold, and do not belong in MOH, but who found the Schmand cover enjoyable, "it fits right in with your magazine", has a bone to pick with our review of the Nelson S. Bond collection: "In your column, *Inquisitions*, you compared Mr. Bond's stories to the symphonies of Dmitri Shostakovich as mostly empty. I certainly disagree with your assessment of Shostakovich. Far from finding them empty, I find they contain suffering, defeat, joy, victory, and deep feeling.

"I believe his symphonies for the most part are worth listening to again and again, especially #4,5,6, 7,8,10 and 11. I have heard all of his symphonies at least twice, some

more, on FM radio, my own record collection, and in the concert hall. I always look forward to a Shostakovich symphony."

The writer cheerfully acknowledges that his value judgments on music are no less subjective than his value judgments on fiction. Both, however, are derived not from cursory reading, or a single hearing, but from prolonged exposure; and comparisons between music and fiction are, of course, at best exploratory. The comparison was made because I am aware that considerable others beside myself have found these symphonies of Shostakovich "mostly empty", and comparison was made for two reasons: (a) to say that the Bond material is very similar in this respect (b) but to point out that this does not make either Bond or Shostakovich worthless, nor does it mean that either one cannot be experienced with pleasure. You will note that I applauded Mr. Bond's writing skill, and I certainly applaud Mr. Shostakovich's skill in orchestration; to me, he is on the genius level in this area, and I get much pleasure listening to the imaginative manner in which he selects the instruments of the orchestra to produce the effects he seeks—effects often, in themselves, wonderfully imaginative. I have never heard a performance of any of his symphonies which left me with the feeling that the composer had failed to orchestrate so that his intended sound would come out clearly. (When anything sounds hazy or harsh, etc., I feel sure that this was what he wanted, and he knew exactly how to get the effect.)

And you'll note that I said "mostly empty", rather than just

"empty". You and I could listen together and argue, but the odds against either of us convincing the other are pretty high. Certainly I concur with your high opinion of the 10th, 4th, and 6th symphonies (I have all 13 of them), and while I do not rate the 1st, 5th, and 8th quite so highly, I find these moving or enjoyable in part. And certainly I do not intend to cut myself off from the possibility of increased appreciation by refusing to listen any further. However, continued exposure can have the effect of decreased appreciation, too; twenty-five years ago, I rated all these works (such as were available to hear) as highly as you do today.

C.J. Probert writes from Toronto: "Congratulations on a great issue—the best I've seen, story-wise. The conclusion of *The Devil's Bride*, and such shorter pieces as *Raymond the Golden*, *A Revolt of the Gods* (I don't care that it's social comment) and *Not Only in Death They Die* made a real impression."

Patrick Miller writes from Lansing Michigan: "I must be one of those readers who is distracted from the obvious, because I didn't know for certain the ending of Robert Greth's story, *The Rope*, until I reached the bottom of page 50; then things became clear.

"I found Ambrose Bierce's *A Revolt of the Gods* to be amusing, and at the same time a little bit frightening. The satire in the story is made clear by the tongue-in-cheek style in which it was written.

"I was glad to see that the

previous portions of *The Devil's Bride* were not just leading up to a disappointing conclusion. Although there wasn't as much intrigue involved as in the first two installments, there was more than enough in the last to hold the attention.

"Reader T.S. Dilley's letter has aroused my curiosity. It might be interesting if you reprint *The Monkey Ship* in MOH to see if it's really the worst tale run in WT.

"One more thing. Please print more Lovecraft stories. I know you must hear this plea from many readers, but he does belong in MOH as the master in the field."

But the only way we could decide whether *The Monkey Ship* was really the worst story ever to appear in *WEIRD TALES*, would be to read each and every story in the entire run of the magazine. Even if we could obtain a complete set, even if it were possible to reprint the entire body of stories in MOH, etc. (it *isn't* possible), do you really think there would be any substantial agreement that any *one* story was the absolute and ultimate worst?

I don't. And, if it were possible to make this experiment, I still wouldn't make it—because it would involve the necessity of perpetuating so many tiresomely bad stories in order to get down to the positive worst, no matter which one a majority of us decided that worst was.

P.J. Andrews writes: "*The Devil's Bride* was really first class, despite a sag in part two, between the episode of getting the mutilated girl's testimony and getting on to the trail of the Devil-Worshiper's meeting hall.

I'm delighted that you published it.

"But there's one unfortunate by-product of tying up so many pages in each issue with a long installment of a serial: there just isn't room for much else except a few short-shorts, as I realize you have to have a minimum-five, it seems—of titles on your contents page. So I hope that if, in the future, you run continued stories, they will not be such awfully long ones. In fact, since you run in to the same problem when you feature a long novelet—25,000 words or more—complete in an issue, I'd like to make a suggestion: do the same thing you did with Algernon Blackwood's long novelet, *A Psychical Invasion*. Run it in two parts. Then you can have a complete short novelet, some regular length short stories, as well as a short-short or so in the same issue, and if anyone doesn't like the serial installment, he isn't

as badly off as if that filled most of the magazine."

I've been rather painfully aware of this problem ever since we ran Jack Williamson's *Wolves of Darkness*, and was unhappy to find that both Dr. Keller's *The Abyss* and the Quinn serial had to monopolize each issue containing an installment. That was one reason why I hesitated so long on both of them; but the comments received seem to have justified their publication.

Some readers have asked for more novels, and have nominated stories even longer than the two above. However, for the time being, there won't be any further stories continued for more than two parts, and such serials will be short novels (or long novelets, as you prefer) which would unbalance an issue too far if run complete.

(continued on next page)

Notice To Collectors

After the 31st of December, 1969, all issue of *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION* and *WORLD-WIDE ADVENTURE* will be priced at 60c per copy, postpaid, so if you do not have issue #9 of *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION* or #7 of *WORLD-WIDE ADVENTURE*, this is your last chance to obtain them from us at 50c per copy, as they will still be considered "current" issues for the rest of this year. (Note, however, that the minimum order is \$1.10 for one "current" and one back issue; after January 1st, "current" issues will refer only to 1970 dates.)

We have not discontinued listing of the contents of back issues of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* that are still in stock with us; it just wasn't possible to get them in this time, due to circumstances beyond control, but we hope to have them in our next issue. These listings, however, will be subject to omission when space is short.

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Gene D'Orsogna writes from Stony Brook, New York: "At the very top of the list of 'greats' in MOH, I place part three of Seabury Quinn's *The Devil's Bride*. Though perhaps not up to installment one, segment three is far superior to the paddled up second portion and one of the most throbbing, engrossing, diverting pieces in your history. Quinn's prose is more opulent and descriptive than usual, concentrating on setting as well as plot. I especially enjoyed the background into de Grandin's love life, which, along with the glimpses into 'Trowbridge's lamb' added more depth than usual into the characters. I must say, however, that even as a total devotee of the Frenchman, I found my credulity delightfully stretched at the picture of de Grandin holding at abeyance thousands of cultists, even backed up by the military. . .

"A certain 'professor' at the college I attend denounced all of weird fiction on the basis—get this—that it is not on the same level as Faulkner or Hemingway. I contested the point with him, pointing out that much weird fiction is little more than diversion. I added your oft-mentioned comment that one must not confuse his levels of literature and that weird fiction can be enjoyed equally as Faulkner, as long as the reader doesn't confuse what he is reading in MOH, or any other such magazine, with Faulkner. God knows, I get more rewarding moments from Faulkner than I do from Arlton Eadie or anyone else isn't worth reading. For my crusading efforts I got a sneer (didn't jeopardize my 'A' though) and he changed the subject. Fascinating, huh? . . .

Coming Next Issue

The little shop was empty of customers. Knowing my proclivities, the owner and his one assistant became tacitly non-attentive after a word of recognition, and left me to rummage at will among the curiously laden shelves. Wedged in between other but less alluring titles, I found a deluxe edition of Goya's *Proverbes*. I began to turn the heavy pages, and was soon engrossed in the diabolic art of these nightmare-nurtured drawings.

It has always been incomprehensible to me that I did not shriek aloud with mindless, overmastering terror, when I happened to look up from the volume, and saw the thing that crouching in a corner of the bookshelves before me. I could not have been more hideously startled if some hellish conception of Goya had suddenly come to life and emerged from one of the pictures in the folio.

What I saw was a forward-slouching, vermin-gray figure, wholly devoid of hair or down or bristles, but marked with faint, etiolated rings like those of a serpent that has lived in darkness. It possessed the head and brow of an anthropoid ape, a semi-canine mouth and jaw, and arms ending in twisted hands whose black hyena talons nearly scraped the floor. The thing was infinitely bestial, and, at the same time, macabre; for its parchment skin was shriveled, corpselike, mummified, in a manner impossible to convey; and from eye sockets well-nigh deep as those of a skull, there glimmered evil slits of yellowish phosphorescence, like burning sulphur. Fangs that were stained as if with poison or gangrene, issued from the slaving, half-open mouth; and the whole attitude of the creature was that of some maleficent monster in readiness to spring . . .

Even as I stared across the Goya, sick with a half-incredulous fear, the apparition moved toward me. I say that it moved, but its change of position was so instantaneous, so utterly without effort or visible transition, that the verb is hopelessly inadequate. The foul specter had seemed five or six feet away. But now it was stooping directly above the volume that I still held in my hands, with its loathsomely lambent eyes peering upward at my face, and a gray-green slime drooling from its mouth on the broad pages. At the same time I breathed an insupportable feter, like a mingling of rancid serpent-stench with the moldiness of antique charnels and the fear-some reek of newly-decaying carrion.

Don't miss this eerie tale

THE HUNTERS FROM BEYOND

by Clark Ashton Smith

"*The Rope* was well written in a homogenized sort of way that gave away its punch far too soon. Even changing the title didn't help.

"I liked the cover. Your color combination was striking and eye-catching. Schmand's drawing, though inferior to Finlay, was okay. It is exactly this picture, though, that will keep MOH off many out-of-the-way newsstands. Issue twenty eight didn't make it to the newsstands here in Stony Brook (the hub of the world's culture) because of the illustration . . .

"By the way, could you tell me where I could obtain a copy of A. Merritt's *Burn, Witch, Burn!*? (That is, if it is in print, and if so, where?) If it is out of print, would you consider serializing it?"

And God knows that while neither Faulkner nor Hemingway appeal to me, I certainly 'consider Tolstoy, Proust, James Joyce, etc., as more rewarding than Arlton Eadie. And I'd say that the opinions of anyone who considers a sneer a valid comment on any level of fiction are to be taken with suspicion at least.

I have searched with diligence through the latest edition of *Soft Cover Books in Print* and must tell you sorrowfully that *Burn, Witch, Burn!*, by A. Merritt is no longer listed, so it is currently out of print. I suspect that Avon will restore it in time, but for the moment have no idea where you can get a copy. It is far too long to serialize here, alas, even if we could obtain reprint rights on terms acceptable to us. RAWL

The Editor's Page

(continued from page 7)

my reply to Gervais constituted my first publication under what eventually came to be a longer chain of *nomes de fraud* than I can now remember (though, of course, in later years there were other—and sometimes more practical—reasons for using pseudonyms). The reply went like this, in part.

"First, what is science fiction? Primarily, it is that branch of literature that deals with the physically unex-

plored reaches of the human mind. The one restriction being that the fundamental basis of the underlying hypothesis must be sound. That is, they must not contradict any *proved* laws of exact science . . .

"Now what is the basis of the weird tale? It is, let us say, an account of things *super-physical*. While science-fiction deals for the most part with tangible developments, weird fiction takes in the more obscure and



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"As Dr. Smith and others far more able than myself have said, we know very little, and the greater part of our lives and experiences deal with that for which we have found no explanation.

"Please also remember that there is no such thing as the 'supernatural'. Everything in the cosmos is natural, but only an infinitesimal position is occupied by what we know as the physical world, consisting of three dimensions. There is the vast, unthinkable cosmos beyond the senses of man and of which as yet he has only vague sensings."

And the letter goes on to decry the sheerly sensational approach to weird fiction, etc. Ah, what wisdom from the tender age of 17—I sometimes wonder where it all went to.

Yet, there is one line I find that I agree with, although for somewhat different reasons: "... there is no such thing as the 'supernatural'."

You will still find persons contending that there are only two possibilities here. A person is either a materialist, accepting only that which science (in the "scientific method" sense) has established as real, or a spiritualist or supernaturalist, believing in any or many aspects of invisible or spiritual things which no scientific instrument has been able to detect. Most religions teach that "God" made a universe of order, in which we live, behind which lies some purpose wherein we human beings are supposed to play a part (or else!), and these natural laws are inexorable—but . . . Above these natural laws is a supernatural order whence the Deity suspends or over-

turns this or that natural law to produce this or that effect which we call a "miracle".

These are the only possibilities, it is claimed—and persons both on the materialistic and supernaturalistic or religionist, etc., side maintain that you have to take one or the other. The trouble here, for many people, is that they cannot find satisfaction in either, all by itself. An arbitrary Deity constantly meddling with the order of the universe for ends that seem dubious revolts the reason of the scientifically-minded person. Nonetheless, this leaves an awful lot of things constantly to be explained away—the necessity of denying that certain events reported to have taken place ever happened at all, or that these events are indicative of fraud, delusion, etc. The strict materialist winds up behind as tight a fence as the strict religionist. But to the spiritualist or religionist, or whatever you want to call him, the notion that the universé "just happened" and that there is no purpose in human existence at all, except that which we (individually or collectively) choose to try to impose upon it can be pretty revolting to reason, too.

I've spelled "spiritualist" with a small "s" to distinguish this from "Spiritualism", referring to a specific body of belief and practice, making the very rough category of "spiritualist" for all those who are not materialists. The large "S" Spiritualists do not believe in the supernatural, either; and their answer to the materialist is that the phenomena they proclaim to be real, not imaginary (continuity of the individual consciousness after the death of the physical body here; communication

with so-called "dead" persons, living in other planes of existence, non-material healing, and a broad variety of talents and phenomena generally called "psychic" are entirely natural.

Their answer to the "orthodox" supernaturalist is simply: "God does not violate his laws in order to prove them true." Meaning that all these phenomena are expressions of natural laws which the scientific method either has not discovered at all, or which are not accessible to measurement, etc., by what we call "scientific methods." Where the strict materialistic or supernaturalistic orientations often lead to a clash between science and religion, this third orientation sees no necessary conflict at all. What we call science is perfectly competent to handle matter and energy on the physical level; but there is a vast area of reality beyond this level, all of it however, under natural and unchanging and unchangeable law.

Of course, the Spiritualists are not the only ones who take this third position; no one group either has or claims any monopoly on it. Many persons who consider themselves Christians, Unitarians, Deists, Jews, Hindus, Agnostics, Occultists, etc.—the list could be extended for at least a full page—actually are in this position whether they proclaim it or not. And it is certainly none of my business where you, good reader, stand; nor again have I any interest in persuading or selling you on any particular one of the three—my only interest is in noting for what it may be worth to you that there are not only two, but three possible positions, so that the materialist-supernaturalist

dilemma is actually a false dilemma.

Perhaps almost any intelligent and imaginative person in modern times, who has become hooked on science and/or weird fiction, has had some measure of the struggle to reconcile or to justify (to himself, if not to other persons whose approval was needed in order for him to be able to pursue a favored reading matter) enjoyment of both science and weird fiction. My own personal difficulties in the earlier years lay in the fact that the basis upon which I obtained permission to buy and collect science fiction magazines was that these were scientific, instructional literature, not cheap pulp trash filled with sensationalism unworthy of an educated person's notice. And, of course, we see there the unstated premise that *anything* one read should be of an "improving" nature—reading just for the pleasure of reading was wickedness, and it was not well to enjoy even worthy reading too much. We can still find traces of this puritanical element around us, as often as not stressed by persons who reject religion entirely.

And there are certainly traces of it in arguments which purport to show the science fiction is superior to weird or fantasy fiction. Sometimes you find these arguments hidden in attempts to define science fiction and weird fiction in such a way that there cannot be any confusion between the two. Lord knows, I have tried to fence science fiction in that way—but found, even when it seemed to me that I finally had solid definitions, that I didn't like being fenced in. RAWL

Subscription And Back Issue Order Page

It may sound like no more than a continuing come-on when you read in issue after issue that our stock is low on back issues of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*. Nonetheless, this is true—and we have no way of knowing how long the supply of any issue will last. Four are out of print, and we kid you not in saying that orders for back issues come in every day. Be warned!



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